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**NAVAL  
POSTGRADUATE  
SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

**THESIS**

**THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:  
RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN THE ISRAELI-  
PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

by

Christian J. Lingenfelder

March 2006

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Daniel Moran  
Barak Salmoni

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**THE ELEPHANT IN THE ROOM:  
RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM IN THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT**

Christian J. Lingenfelder  
Captain, United States Air Force  
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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF ARTS IN NATIONAL SECURITY AFFAIRS**

from the

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## ABSTRACT

Successive U.S. administrations have mired themselves in fruitless attempts to arrive at a peaceful conclusion to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jewish and Islamic extremist groups have both been complicit in the delay, complication and derailment of peace efforts undertaken by regional moderates and the international community. Whatever the ancillary secular motivations of these factions have been, both sides also lay claim to profound religious reasons for their opposition to peace.

Israeli religious Zionist extremists acting on a divine mandate have pressed to incorporate all of biblical Israel into their modern state, pursuing settlement activity and violence against Arabs and fellow Israelis to achieve this. Palestinian Islamic extremists claim justification from their scriptures for their war against the Jewish state and their ultimate goal of seeing it annihilated. These scriptural dogmas have been reified by religious leaders of both faiths, and have been utilized as ideological grounds for violence by their respective religious extremist groups.

This work is an effort to expose the significant religious motivations propelling Zionist and Islamic extremist opponents of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process; seeking thereby to raise awareness of the origins of this complex and central dimension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict among U.S. policymakers and intelligence analysts.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

### A. RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM THWARTING PEACE SINCE 1993

Noted terrorism expert Mark Juergensmeyer told the story of a *Hamas* suicide bomber who, in a video tape made the day prior to his operation, claimed that he was “doing this for Allah.”<sup>1</sup> Juergensmeyer proceeded to characterize this example as indicative of a potent philosophy propelling its adherents to “do virtually anything if...[they believe it has] been sanctioned by divine mandate or conceived in the mind of God,” and which “has surpassed all ordinary claims of political authority and elevated religious ideologies to supernatural heights.”<sup>2</sup> In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this type of commitment to religious doctrine has played a powerful role in motivating religious Zionist and Islamic religious extremists. Extremist groups and individuals of both persuasions have successfully delayed, complicated or derailed a succession of attempted peace initiatives, beginning with the September 1993 “Declaration of Principles On Interim Self-Government Arrangements” (more commonly known and hereafter referred to as “Oslo I”),<sup>3</sup> signed by the various Israeli governments and Palestinian political representatives and backed by the United States and its allies. In spite of this fact, few if any of the peace proposals or public expressions of policy have even so much as made mention of the veritable elephant in the room fueling that conflict: Jewish and Islamic religious extremism. Scriptural doctrines, religious traditions and their human purveyors within Israeli Jewish and Palestinian Islamic circles have played weighty roles in cultivating the religious extremist movements that have continuously and often violently frustrated peace efforts from the earliest days of Zionism, but particularly from Oslo I to the present day.

#### 1. Why Bother With Religion at All?

“The most intrepid revolutionary is the one who has a fear greater than anything his opponents can inflict upon him.” So wrote Reformation historian Roland Bainton

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 2003), 219.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> *Jewish Virtual Library*, “Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (September 13, 1993),” [database online]; available from <http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Peace/dop.html>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2005.

about the preeminent Protestant reformer Martin Luther.<sup>4</sup> This statement is poignant regarding the motivational power of religious convictions and beliefs. For those who subscribe to a given religion, even in a moderate sense, their beliefs have opportunity to hold sway over every aspect of life—birth, life, marriage, politics, justice, ethics, morals, death, eternity, and even seemingly mundane topics such as diet and attire. Over the course of human history, religion has played critical roles in the formation of all levels of human relationship, from the family to that of entire empires and civilizations. Religion is a tangible framework connecting humanity with the intangible—something greater than itself. Even for the individual who claims to be non-religious, this very claim and its implications may take on the guise of religion, with potential to govern any or all of the aspects of the individual’s life which religion might otherwise do.

Along the nebulous continuum of religious devotion, moving into that realm of seriously devoted adherents which grows ever smaller-yet-more-dedicated as one approaches the far right margin, religion becomes not only an *influencing* factor in life, but increasingly takes on a *foundational* role for all of life. In this arena, which certainly varies from individual to individual, sect to sect and religion to religion, the observer increasingly encounters people for whom the tenets of scripture, the teachings of holy men and women and the mandates of those believed to be deities are absolutely inviolable. For people who hold such beliefs, the mores of society-at-large are often valid only so far as they fall in-line with religious dictates. For some, much of what constitutes human society from the noble to the routine is viewed as tainted by imperfection and lack of conformity to the ultimate supernatural standard. It is here that one can find *some* of Luther’s “intrepid revolutionaries;” those for whom censure, ostracism and even physical death brought on by the exercise of their convictions not only holds no fear, but ought to be accepted and even actively *pursued* in obedience of holy writ and in the quest for eternal recompense.

Of course, these concepts fly in the face of reality in much of the West. The secularizing effects of democratization, modernity, capitalism and globalization have simultaneously created and fed off of Western society’s embrace of moral pluralism.

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<sup>4</sup> Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther* (New York: Meridian, 1995), 104.

Attempts to claim or to universally impose absolute truth outside of the scientific or intimately personal domains can be viewed with skepticism and even hostility. Along these lines, Western thought favors those faiths that are all-inclusive, or at least those which have been stripped of their exclusive and absolutist elements. This may in fact create the only ideological structure within which a liberal democracy can properly function. In certain ways, the moral relativism and religious pluralism underscoring modern Western (including American) society has become indistinguishable from the democratic system being promulgated within (and in some cases forced upon) the developing world. It is no wonder that much of the West stands dumbfounded in the face of the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This conflict, for all its contributing storylines of political intrigue, war, tyranny of the strong over the weak, economic imbalance and natural resource theft, finds religion at its very core—the religion of small but dedicated numbers of Jews and Muslims at the extreme fringes of their respective faiths who stand in religiously-sanctioned opposition to one another.

Though he wrote specifically about terrorism, Ralph Peters' observations about religious extremism and his indictment of Western minds on the matter are poignant:

Those who feel no vital faith cannot comprehend faith's power. A man or woman who has never been intoxicated by belief will default to mirror-imaging when asked to describe terror's roots. He who has never experienced a soul-shaking glimpse of the divine inevitably explains religion-driven suicide bombers in terms of a lack of economic opportunity or social humiliation. But the enemies we face are burning with belief, on fire with their vision of an immanent, angry god. Our intelligentsia is less equipped to understand such men [and women] than our satellites are to find them.<sup>5</sup>

This work contends that such religious extremisms have been playing a central role in confounding the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. They have succeeded despite all the best efforts of the United States, the international community and the Israeli and Palestinian political moderates. Religious extremist violence has surged since the first bilateral attempt at a peace agreement in 1993. Looking at the scriptural and doctrinal bases for Jewish and Islamic religious extremism, the reader will observe that the most

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<sup>5</sup> Ralph Peters, "The Counterrevolution in Military Affairs: Fashionable Thinking About Defense Ignores the Great Threats of Our Time," *Weekly Standard*, Vol. 11, Issue 20 (02/06/2006).

extreme religious opponents of peace draw support from religious diktats hundreds and even thousands of years old, themes that more moderate elements of Judaism and Islam cannot dispute (except to offer differing interpretations which extremists refuse to accept) because they hail from the very canon of Jewish and Islamic scriptures.

As will be seen here, when contending with Jewish and Islamic extremism in Israel and Palestine, the West is not dealing with a demographic that values Western notions of civil society, certainly not as a replacement for or competitor with their respective religious creeds. In contrast to many Westerners' efforts to avoid dissonance between comfortable life and religious demands, those who dwell on the extreme fringes of religions such as Judaism and Islam will actually embrace internal conflict. As Gershom Gorenberg puts it, "...to believe is to live with dissonance"<sup>6</sup>—that disconnect between belief in a God who is good and a world that is so obviously broken. Citing USC millennialism scholar Stephen O'Leary, Gorenberg also states, however, that the conviction of extremists in *both* of these religions is that God knows creation has been ravaged, and has had a plan to put things right all along.<sup>7</sup> Where the extreme fringes of Judaism and Islam begin to *diverge* from one another, though, is in their respective scriptures' definitions of which side is in the right and which will burn in hell.

These are disturbing thoughts on their own merit. They are especially disturbing in the United States of America, where successive governments, the present administration included, have employed their prestige and political capital in the (so far) vain attempt to bring this crisis to a peaceful, equitable conclusion. Aside from the ideological liabilities facing American society as it attempts to get a grasp on the religious sources of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, there is the added complication that many of America's best individual minds advising the government on how to resolve (or simply manage) this conflict are at a self-admitted loss to understand its religious aspects. Noted political scientist Robert Jervis openly admits the inability of many in his field to contend adequately with matters of religion. He wrote in *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* that "terrorism grounded in religion poses special problems for modern social

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<sup>6</sup> Gershom Gorenberg, *End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

science, which has paid little attention to religion, perhaps because most social scientists are not religious, shy away from deeply held beliefs, and find this subject unfathomable if not embarrassing.”<sup>8</sup> Though he was not writing specifically about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Jervis nevertheless struck a true note when he said that the roots of religiously motivated terrorism run much deeper than what America or the West could hope to solve by merely addressing issues of “grinding poverty in the Third World, great and increasing inequality within and among nations, corrupt and unresponsive governments, and American policies that range the United States alongside the forces of injustice and oppression, especially in the Middle East.”<sup>9</sup> He surmised that even if the United States or its allies were to put right each and every one of these matters, it would still entirely fail to satisfy the grievances of those whose lives are “regulated by Muslim clerics who read the Koran the way Taliban leaders did.”<sup>10</sup> The same principle could be applied to the way the United States and the West have tried to redress the dogmatic demands of religious Zionist extremists in Israel whose lives are guided by a rabbinate and a worldview founded on scriptural bedrock 2,500-3,000 years old. If Jervis was right, one would expect that vigorous efforts to mediate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have bought little ground from those on the religious fringes. Secular remedies have served in many cases to draw the religious differences of Jewish and Muslim extremists into even starker relief, and to spur these elements to greater effort and sacrifice *against* peace.

Before any further pursuit of the discussion of religion and religious extremism, whether it pertain to Judaism, Islam or to any other faith, it is essential to note that the religions in question are by no means monolithic, nor are the myriad of sects and movements that can be traced within their ill-defined boundaries. Since any religious faith has the potential to propel individuals toward extreme action, it is important to avoid ascribing such tendencies to all believers within a given faith or sub-group within it. Many liberal Jews as well as those not actively practicing Judaism might consider the members of *Gush Emunim* or *Kach* to be dangerous radicals well outside the confines of legitimate Jewish faith. Their opposite numbers in *Gush Emunim* or *Kach* might retort

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Jervis, *American Foreign Policy in a New Era* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 42.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 43.

that any Jew who does not practice his or her religion according to traditional precepts is no Jew at all. Similar arguments could be made regarding Muslims, not just along sectarian (*Sunni*, *Shi'i* or *Sufi*) lines, but within each sect as well. Just as a *Sunni* and *Shi'i* might argue back and forth about whether the other is truly Muslim, a devout, practicing *Sunni* might contend that his or her *Sunni* brethren in the following of *Hamas* or Islamic Jihad are not following the true path of Islam, either.

Another crucial point to note before pursuing this argument any further is that the debate surrounding religious extremism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is *not about terrorism*—a *tactic* of “premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against noncombatant targets by subnational groups or clandestine agents”<sup>11</sup>—despite its recurrence within the context of the dispute. The religious conflict here runs much deeper than tactical choices; it underlies the actions (and inactions) of governments, internal party politics, economics, demographics, the religious establishment and its fringe movements—embracing and even eclipsing all of them. Ever since President Bush’s speech to Congress nine days after the events of September 11, 2001, much has been made of the “war against terrorism”<sup>12</sup> currently being fought by the United States and its allies against an ill-defined, loosely-connected global diffusion of Islamic extremists. It is en vogue in the United States to conflate and label all such individuals and organizations under a single rubric, such as *al-Qa'eda*, though it is completely inaccurate to do so. In the Israeli-Palestinian milieu, this theme has likewise not gone unnoticed. Former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon did not hesitate to jump on America’s “war against terrorism” bandwagon in 2002, tying Israel’s armed struggles with Palestinian militants to this larger mêlée in a national address to Israeli citizens.<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Why “Extremism” Instead of “Fundamentalism” or “Radicalism”?**

In the preface to the paperback edition of his book, *End of Days*, Gershom Gorenberg, Israeli newspaper editor, columnist and associate of the Center for Millennial Studies at Boston University, makes the following statement about the relationship of the

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<sup>11</sup> *Foreign Relations and Intercourse, U.S. Code*, Vol. 22, sec. 2656f (2000).

<sup>12</sup> Jervis, 46.

<sup>13</sup> “Sharon Declares ‘War Against Terrorism,’” (CNN.com/WORLD, April 2, 2002), [database online]; available from <http://archives.cnn.com/2002/WORLD/meast/03/31/mideast/>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2006.

Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* (which began in September 2000) and the events of September 11, 2001: “They reveal the power of religious extremism, millennial visions and the symbolism of sacred soil to ignite violence. And both are linked to the battle to control the Temple Mount, otherwise known as Al-Aqsa.”<sup>14</sup> Gorenberg also says, “it is easy for those who do not share extremists’ beliefs to dismiss them as irrational or as a cover for other commitments. Yet dismissal leaves us deaf to the internal logic of people who believe they must shatter the world to make it whole.”<sup>15</sup>

In this work, variations on the word “extreme” will be used to refer to the fringe elements of both Judaism and Islam, which are often termed “fundamentalist” or “radical” in other works. John Voll chose to use the word “fundamentalist” in his work, “Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World,” as he felt it best characterized a broad movement within Islam to return to the religion’s original precepts and try to forge a modern life according to them.<sup>16</sup> In that respect, “fundamentalism” can play a role in defining one aspect of our present study, since the religious underpinnings of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, as will be seen, are deeply rooted in the foundational scriptural texts of Judaism and Islam. While the word “radical” on the one hand connotes a branch which issues from an origin or a fundamental, it can also signify “a considerable departure from the usual or traditional,”<sup>17</sup> and can thus be problematic to an analysis that places considerable focus on that which is elemental and traditional within Jewish and Islamic scriptural doctrines. For these reasons, “extreme” is a better way to characterize the individuals and groups in this study. It is preferable because it sidesteps questions of what is orthodox and what is not, and instead draws attention to the *extent* or *limit* to which adherents are willing to go in practice *because of* their religious beliefs. This work will highlight those core values and texts of Jewish and Islamic scripture that divide religious extremist elements of both the Israeli and Palestinian societies from their mainstream brethren.

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<sup>14</sup> Gorenberg, v.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> John O. Voll, “Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and the Sudan,” *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Vol. 1, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 347.

<sup>17</sup> *Merriam Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Encyclopædia Britannica 2004 Ultimate Reference Suite DVD*, s.v. “radical” [DVD-ROM] (2004).

### **3. A Word About Transliteration of Arabic and Hebrew Words, Names, Terminology, Etc.**

This work, focusing as it does on aspects of Jewish and Islamic history, scripture and current events, contains frequent translations and transliterations of Hebrew and Arabic words. Both languages are Semitic in origin, and as such are based upon simple and complex developments of basic tri-consonant root words. Even though both alphabets contain letters that can be utilized to approximate English language vowels, the preponderance of vowel sounds are indicated through the use of diacritical markings on consonants. With respect to the consonants themselves, both Hebrew and Arabic contain multiple letters indicating varying pronunciations of consonants for which there exists only one letter in English. Additionally, certain consonant sounds in these Semitic languages are not found at all in English and vice versa. All of these factors conspire to make it difficult to arrive at a uniform system for transliteration. In the case of translation, as is frequently seen, it can be quite difficult to render certain phrases or idioms in one language word-for-word into another.

The author is an Arabic linguist, and thus where possible, has transliterated Arabic phrases into English in such a way that enables the reader to pronounce them aloud in a manner which approximates the original language. Where there is a need for translation, the author has endeavored to present the reader with a contextually accurate translation, although there may be other meanings for the given word or phrase. In the case of Hebrew words and phrases, the author has chosen to borrow the transliterations and translations used across a preponderance of sources. Where no such majority usage has occurred among multiple sources, the author has selected one meaning or transliteration and used it uniformly. In all cases, translations of Hebrew and Arabic words will be indicated parenthetically immediately following the word in question. For example: *Jihad* (“struggle” or “holy war”). Similarly, all transliterated Hebrew and Arabic words will be rendered in italics, with the exception of certain proper names. Thus, terms such as *Jihad* and certain less-common place names like *Haram al-Sharif* would be italicized, whereas a man’s name such as Fathi al-Shiqaqi would not be.

## **B. ORGANIZATION OF ARGUMENT**

This work utilizes historical method to address the topic of religious extremism in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Using this methodology, the four body chapters and the overall thesis are essentially structured to answer three questions: “What is the problem?”, “How do we know?” and “Why does it matter?”

The thesis is organized to address the problems of Israeli religious Zionist extremism and Palestinian Islamic extremism in-turn. Chapter II looks at the scriptural and leadership bases for religious Zionism in Israel, revealing that there are very ancient, deeply-rooted doctrinal foundations for religious Zionists’ commitments to their divinely-appointed racial preeminence, to the entire land of Israel and therefore to rejection of any concessions to their Arab neighbors. Not only do the scriptural texts exist to support these beliefs, but charismatic leadership has arisen over the last century which has drawn them out of holy writ and has used them to galvanize an educated, sold-out cadre of believers committed to their realization, and thus to uncompromising opposition to equitable peace with the Palestinians. Chapter III considers the principal Jewish organizations which have put flesh and blood on the religious Zionist belief system and have put it to action over the last three to four decades, culminating in the problematic issues faced by would-be peacemakers in the period since the signing of Oslo I in 1993.

Mirroring the structure of the previous chapters on religious Zionist extremism, the next two chapters switch sides to address the matter of Palestinian Islamic extremism and the role it has played in perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Chapter IV opens the Islamic scriptures in search of tenets that provide Islamic extremists with due cause to unequivocally oppose the existence of the state of Israel, and then presents the handful of religious ideologues that have rendered these tenets in the modern idiom of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Proceeding out of this discussion, Chapter V details the principal Palestinian Islamic extremist groups that have been constructed over the last three decades to put Islamic extremist dogmas into practice, particularly in the post-Oslo I era.

Chapter VI provides a brief summary of the ground that has been covered, closing with some propositions regarding the salience of religious extremism to the continuance of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## II. ISRAELI RELIGIOUS ZIONIST EXTREMISM

### A. INTRODUCTION

How has religion played a guiding and sustaining role for Jewish extremists in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? What is it within Judaism that could provide sufficient incentive to radicalize individual Jews against the prospect of peace between Israelis and Palestinians? Are there canonical, scripturally-based religious doctrines that predispose religious extremists to violently oppose an equitable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? If such doctrines exist, who has interpreted and propagated them for the believers, and which extremist groups have followed their lead? To address these questions, we will first consider a brief background of the historical role religion has played in the Zionist movement leading up to the time period in question. Having done this, we will then look at the Jewish scriptures in search of teachings and themes that might be applied to the conflict. From there we will follow with an examination of the principal religious authorities which have undertaken to interpret scripture on the subject for their respective religions. Through consideration of these topics, the reader will find that many religious Zionists (Jewish extremists) hold to religious dictates which they interpret as leaving leave no room for compromise with the Palestinians over the land of Israel.

The answer to this scriptural-basis question for regarding religious Zionist Extremist organizations subscribing to scriptural doctrines have played a very effective, increasing role in creating complexities, roadblocks and even acts of violence that have stymied efforts to implement any peace agreement. The hearts of those most dedicated to seeing the conflict persist *ad infinitum* are motivated by a loyalty that trumps all others and by narratives that no human authority can alter.

Judaism is the oldest of the world's three major monotheistic religions. It was founded, as will be seen, upon a promise and command that God made to the patriarch Abraham more than 3,500 years ago. The command required ethnic and religious purity, while the promise included the guarantee of land to Abraham and his descendants—

“from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates,”<sup>18</sup> (modern-day Israel, occupied Palestine, and parts of present-day Syria, Jordan, Iraq, Egypt and the Lebanon). God also pledged permanent divine blessing upon Abraham, his progeny and the whole world through them. Judaism’s foundational precepts are contained in the rich scriptural texts of the *Torah*, *Nevi’im* and *Kethuvim* (collectively known by their acronym, *Tanakh*, or variously as the Jewish Bible, etc), the same collection of books that form the Christian Old Testament. These are expounded upon in canonical rabbinical traditions maintained in the *Talmud*, as well as other minor writings. While it would be a monumental undertaking to encapsulate the entirety of this long scriptural tradition (the author makes no pretense of doing so) in a single work, certain aspects of it will be considered here for their very real influence upon the present-day Israeli-Palestinian conflict, particularly as it involves religious Zionist Jews in Israel and the Occupied Territories. God’s naming of the Jews as His chosen people, His promise of the land to Abraham and His requirement of religious purity collectively inspire some religious Zionists to take extreme measures that have undermined efforts to forge lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, and have cost the land, livelihoods and even lives of thousands of Palestinian Arabs.

## **B. ROOTS OF ISRAELI RELIGIOUS ZIONIST EXTREMISM**

Before examining the scriptural bases of religious Zionist extremism, it is necessary to first consider the historical origins of the Zionist movement as a whole, both in its secular-political and religious vestments. Historian James Gelvin wrote that Zionism was initially a movement pressing world governments for a *political* abode for Jews. He chronicled the life and work of Theodor Herzl, the founding father of the World Zionist Organization and the impetus behind the surge of political Zionism in turn-of-the-(twentieth)-century Europe. As a result of the Dreyfuss Affair, which occurred in one of the most liberal European countries (France), Herzl became convinced that Jews could not be truly safe without their own state. His ideas led to what eventually became a widely-accepted notion that this state should be planted in Judaism’s ancient Middle Eastern abode. By the early decades of the twentieth century, the socio-economic and settlement activities of the members of the *aliyot* (waves of immigrating Jews) had

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<sup>18</sup> Gen. 15:18, JPS.

already resulted in establishment of strong communal institutions and the revival of the use of Hebrew in Ottoman Palestine. Ultimately, the goals of political Zionism were twofold: the allocation of land somewhere on earth for a specifically and separately Jewish polity; and, the far-preferred hope that this land would in fact be Palestine.<sup>19</sup>

Early Zionist writings, like those of U.S. Justice Louis Brandeis, have a decidedly non-religious feel to them. He called on American Jews to support their brothers and sisters forging a new home in Palestine and lauded those who took the dreams of centuries and began to forge them into reality. Rather than lamenting or condemning life in the Diaspora, Brandeis instead lionized the opportunity of those Jews around the world to be part of the historic Zionist effort.<sup>20</sup> In all of it, Brandeis made no distinguishing comment about a Jew's religious inclinations or those of the *Yishuv* (Jews already living in Palestine).

On the opposite end of the spectrum from the political Zionists like Herzl and Brandeis were those adherents of Judaism who felt (and feel) that the return to Palestine was not something to be pursued as a practical, worldly endeavor. As noted by Jacob Klatzkin, such individuals regarded Zionism as a spiritual outlook rather than as a political program, and "cited the [Diaspora] as evidence that the basis for our life is the eternal content of Judaism."<sup>21</sup> These people characterized return to the land as unnecessary. Some argued that scripture intended such a return to be the result of Divine intervention rather than human effort.

Samuel Heilman and Menachem Friedman, writing for the Fundamentalism Project of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, laid a useful historical framework for differentiating between various sects of Judaism. Tracing the legacy of European Jewry back to the years before the Second World War, Heilman and Friedman established three broad categories into which European Jews divided themselves on the issue of the practice of their religion: "assimilated," "acculturated" and "contra-

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<sup>19</sup> James L. Gelvin, *The Modern Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 218-19.

<sup>20</sup> Louis D. Brandeis, "The Jewish Problem and How to Solve It," *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959): 520.

<sup>21</sup> Jacob Klatzkin, "Boundaries," *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959): 319.

acculturated.”<sup>22</sup> The first group essentially bought the secularism of their host cultures and societies wholesale, and for all practical purposes “ceased to be Jews.”<sup>23</sup> In contrast, “acculturated” Jews (*Maskilim*, meaning “enlightened”) chose a middle road “[embracing] the opportunities of emancipation without necessarily abandoning their attachments to Judaism and Jewish life.”<sup>24</sup> The *Maskilim* essentially lived in two worlds, learning the language and engaging in the commerce and culture of their host nations, and yet observing the dictates of Judaism in the home. *Maskilim* could write about the modern world and culture in Hebrew—not just reserving that ancient tongue for religious purposes—and were the strain of Judaism that could easily conceive of a Jewish enclave within the family of nations. In this respect, they were “religious Zionists, who believed they could be citizens like everyone else but in a distinctively Jewish modern state, without having to meaningfully compromise their fidelity to Orthodox Judaism.”<sup>25</sup> Finally, there were those of the contra-acculturation camp, referred to as the “*Haredim*,” a phrase taken from the prophetic book of Isaiah, describing those who “‘tremble...at His [God’s] word.’” These Jews considered themselves the true Orthodoxy, resisting all external attempts at forcing them to assimilate with their host culture, and engaging in “gatekeeping” in order to keep the “insiders in.”<sup>26</sup> The *Haredim* made use of *yeshivot* (plural of “*yeshiva*”—a Jewish religious school) to sequester their young males and bring them up according to the strict requirements of their sect. As Zionism waxed popular, the *Maskilim* and *Haredim* found themselves increasingly at odds with one another. The ultra-conservative *Haredim* viewed “people like the maskil Moses Mendelssohn and chief rabbi Abraham I. Kook of Palestine, or most of the leaders of religious Zionist parties...as anti-heroes...[whose] failure to struggle against the eroding effects of contemporary culture was the greatest sin.”<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Samuel C. Heilman and Menachem Friedman, “Religious Fundamentalism and Religious Jews: The Case of the *Haredim*,” *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Vol. 1, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 201.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 219.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 219.

There were also divisions among those Jews already living in Palestine at this time. There were a number of Orthodox Jews, the “Old Yishuv,” already living in Palestine and practicing their religion there prior to the mass influx of exiles from the Diaspora in the early 1900s. These did not seek a separate Jewish state, and were definitely not Zionists.<sup>28</sup> The “New Yishuv,” or Zionists, were by contrast (predominantly) secular Jews, who started arriving in Palestine in increasing numbers (very quickly outnumbering the Old *Yishuv*) after the 1917 Balfour Declaration. Perhaps the most important distinction between the two lay in the fact that the Old *Yishuv* were waiting “for Heaven to take the first step in bringing about redemption, [while] the Zionists were going to redeem the land themselves through their own efforts.”<sup>29</sup> As the Old *Yishuv* were joined in Palestine by increasing numbers of the *haredi Ashkenazim* (European ultra-Orthodox Jews), the collective bloc of them labored (unsuccessfully) to oppose the Zionists’ efforts to create a Jewish nation in Palestine. For the Old *Yishuv* as well as for the newly-arriving *Haredim*, preservation of Judaism lay in commitment to Torah and tradition, not in conquest of the Holy Land. They were rapidly eclipsed, though not eliminated, by the Zionists after Israeli independence in 1948.<sup>30</sup> The political interests of the *Haredim* in Israel eventually came to be represented by the *Agudat Israel* party in opposition to the larger Labor and Likud parties, both of which, despite their differences, shared a common devotion to Zionism as a political program oriented toward the creation of a sovereign state.<sup>31</sup>

Between the secular Zionists and the *Haredim* lie the religious Zionists. They do not dispute the efforts and accomplishments of political Zionists, but amplify their political commitment by incorporating within it those elements of Jewish history and scripture that (in their minds) compel Jews to see a return to their ancient homeland. Yehiel Pines was of this ilk. He likened the divorce of religion from Zionism “to [depriving] a living body of its soul in order to revive it by an electric shock, which may

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<sup>28</sup> Heilman and Friedman, 223.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 224.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 224-227.

have value in resuscitation, but is no substitute for real vitality.”<sup>32</sup> In the marriage of race and religion, the Jews are unique in the world, said Pines—particularly because the institutions of Judaism have followed and sustained the Jews from ancient Israel throughout their Diaspora. He claimed, as secular Zionists did, that land and language were the fundamental criteria for nationhood—but added that religion cannot be disaggregated from them. In Pines’ belief, even seemingly secular fields like science and education were means for Jews to better understand the Almighty. As such, nothing undertaken by Jews in their Zionist pursuits could reasonably be counted independent of Judaism.<sup>33</sup>

To further the cause of religion among the Zionists, some argued that religion, while being the best foundation for Zionism, was also not going to last forever in Diaspora. In its state of Diaspora, the nation was wasting away, and could not survive forever, wrote Klatzkin; the great bastion of Judaism, its religion, was incapable of safeguarding Judaism and preventing Jews from “assimilating” and ceasing any kind of meaningful Jewish existence outside the land.<sup>34</sup> Moses Hess summed up the position by contending that Jews had to rise to reclaim Judaism’s greatest hope, “the restoration of the Jewish nation.”<sup>35</sup>

Religious and secular Zionists shared a common conception of a Jewish state as one in which Jews constitute a permanent, controlling majority. To accept any other possibility would have been to relegate Jews once again to the unprotected position of being beholden to another people. For religious Zionists in particular, the possibility that the Jews, having returned to their home in Palestine after a two-thousand-year hiatus, might be supplanted and cowed by late-coming Muslims is unthinkable.

Gershom Gorenberg, an Israeli Jewish journalist who immigrated to Israel from the United States in 1977, observed the following upon his arrival there:

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<sup>32</sup> Yehiel M. Pines, “Jewish Nationalism Cannot Be Secular,” *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959): 411.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 411-12.

<sup>34</sup> Klatzkin, 320-22.

<sup>35</sup> Moses Hess, “Rome and Jerusalem,” *The Zionist Idea: A Historical Analysis and Reader*, ed. Arthur Hertzberg (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1959): 123.

ultra-nationalist Orthodox settlers of the West Bank...were changing the map of the occupied territories [sic], but they were also imposing a new map on Jerusalem. The settlers' ideology was messianism: The creation of Israel fulfilled prophecy, and the conquest of the West Bank was another step toward final redemption. They claimed to know God's program for history, and their place in it. For the most extreme, that hubris freed them of all moral constraints...<sup>36</sup>

This concept, *messianism*, which will be discussed further, is central to the faith of many religious Zionists as it "refers to the expectation of a righteous king, descended from David, who will both restore the Jews' fortune and bring an era of peace for the entire world."<sup>37</sup> There is both considerable power and unpredictability in messianic faith. It "leads to conspiratorial thinking ...[and] interprets the actions of real people...as fitting that of characters in the story. It constantly needs rewriting, as life fails to fit the believer's detective work about what happens next."<sup>38</sup> Its greatest power is its expression of "what most of all makes us human—the determination to find meaning and order in what appears disparate and disconnected."<sup>39</sup> Its most dangerous form in the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is "'catastrophic millennialism'"—a form of messianism wherein "the worse things get, the better they really are, and disaster will destroy the old order to make room for the new. Human beings stand by and watch—unless, in another variation, they should hurry the cleansing catastrophe along."<sup>40</sup>

Secular Zionism, with its non-religious aspirations nevertheless played "the sorcerer's apprentice, [appropriating] the apparently extinguished symbols of faith, only to see them burst back into flames in his hands" over the issues of Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.<sup>41</sup> These flames waxed intense concurrent with the surge in Jewish settlement activity in the Occupied Territories following the 1967 War, and more still with the ascendance of the right-wing Likud party in Israeli politics during the 1970s and 80s. Through the 1990s and into the new millennium, the stakes rose considerably for

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<sup>36</sup> Gorenberg, 5.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 37.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 84.

Jewish religious extremists as Israeli and Palestinian moderates came successively closer to dismantling victories which the extremists had been fighting to consolidate.

### **C. SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS & TEACHINGS OF EXTREMIST RABBIS**

The dictates of scripture and teachings of Jewish rabbis (religious scholars and teachers) interpreting those scriptures are of first importance for developing an understanding of religious Zionist extremism as these two pillars form the principal basis from which most religious Jews, Zionist extremists in particular, derive their understanding of what is expected of them by God. Drawing from these canonical, broadly accepted sources, certain Jewish rabbis and their flocks have built the foundation of the religious Zionism seen today in settlements in the Occupied Territories (OT), in the violent actions of various individual extremists (against Arabs and fellow Jews), in the platforms of extremist groups and even in some of the policies taken by the Israeli government. Of course, one should not expect to find specific reference to Muslims in the Jewish scriptures, whose canonization occurred 700 years before the birth of Muhammad.<sup>42</sup> As will be shown in the case of the *Gush Emunim*, this very fact plays an interesting role in the doctrine of religious Zionism. The Arabs (be they Muslim or Christian) are not really of primary importance—in the push for the whole land of Israel and the Third Temple, any adversary would be pushed to the side. We will first look at Jewish scriptures and what these give to religious Zionist extremists. After this, we will focus our attention on the particular rabbis who have played central roles in interpreting these texts, teaching from them and motivating their fellow Jews to follow them. At the conclusion of this section, it will be evident that present-day religious Zionist extremists have in the scriptures and in these Zionist rabbis a bedrock of support for their beliefs and actions to keep the Israeli-Palestinian conflict alive.

#### **1. Jewish Scriptures**

The *Torah* and *Talmud* are full of teachings that are appropriated by religious Zionist extremists for their present-day interests. The scriptural doctrines can be loosely

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<sup>42</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester: Inter-Varsity Press, and Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 54-59.

organized under three broad themes: the Jews as God's chosen people, the land of Israel as God's divine endowment to Jews, and God's promise of eternal redemption to the Jews.

In the first category, the doctrine of the Jews as God's chosen people hails from God's promise to the patriarch Abraham in the book of Genesis. Abraham's family hailed from Ur of the Chaldeans (in modern Iraq), but migrated during his lifetime to Haran (in the border region of modern Turkey and Syria). While there, God commanded Abraham to leave Haran and go to a place God would show him. There, God said, "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you."<sup>43</sup> When Abraham arrived in Canaan (modern Israel and Palestine), God told him, "I will assign this land to your offspring."<sup>44</sup> This promise was reiterated in Genesis 13 along with the divine guarantee "I will give all the land that you see to you and your offspring forever."<sup>45</sup> One of the first disputes between Jews and Muslims finds its roots during this period surrounding who was Abraham's true heir: Isaac or Ishmael. Ishmael was actually Abraham's firstborn, though by a servant in his household, not by Abraham's wife, Sarah. However, according to the *Torah*, Isaac, the second son of Abraham but the only son of his union with Sarah, was to be Abraham's heir, not Ishmael.<sup>46</sup> Arab Muslims consider themselves the descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, and the Jews trace their descent from the patriarch through Isaac. Being God's chosen people meant that Jews were required to set themselves apart from their neighbors through a complex system of religious observances and legal ordinances given to the patriarchs Abraham and Moses.<sup>47</sup> These dictates, if observed to the letter, encompassed almost every aspect of everyday Jewish life, and are contained in the *Torah* and the traditions of the Jews passed down over the millennia. These religious directives also included specifications for the sole acceptable house of worship, the Tabernacle, a portable, tent-like structure used for worship by the Jewish nation since their years in the wilderness following their escape from slavery in Egypt.

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<sup>43</sup> Gen. 12:2, JPS.

<sup>44</sup> Gen. 12:7, JPS.

<sup>45</sup> Gen. 13:15, JPS.

<sup>46</sup> Gen. 17:21, JPS.

<sup>47</sup> This system of religious observances is detailed in the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

The Tabernacle was replaced by a permanent structure, the Temple in Jerusalem, built by King Solomon, the last ruler of the united kingdom of Israel before its subjugation by surrounding empires.<sup>48</sup>

The significance of the Temple is its historical centrality to the proper worship of God. According to Mosaic Law (a legal code for the Jewish nation given to Moses by God during their wilderness sojourn) as contained in the *Torah*, absolute purity and perfection were required of the Jews by God. Mosaic Law presupposed that God's people would be unable to attain or maintain such a standard, and accordingly set up an elaborate system of rituals designed to make restitution for wrong-doing and thereby to restore the purity of individual and nation before God. Central to this system were ritual sacrifices of ceremonially clean animals, presided over by members of the Jewish priestly tribe of Levi on an altar in the Tabernacle. When the functions of the Tabernacle were relocated and, in effect, centralized in Solomon's Temple, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem became the sole nexus of the religious practice of Judaism, and thus of the nation of Israel and the Jewish people. Though the sacrificial system was suspended at various points in Jewish national history because of foreign invasion and exile, subsequent periods of national repentance and return from exile were followed by restoration of Temple sacrifices and thus recovery of the ritual purity required by God. The First Temple, also known as Solomon's Temple, was destroyed in 586 BC.<sup>49</sup> The Second Temple, or Herod's Temple, was destroyed by the Roman Emperor Titus in 70 A.D., halting permanently the Jewish sacrificial system, the focal point of ancient Judaism.<sup>50</sup> No Jewish house of worship has existed on the site since.

The matter of the Temple is complicated because the site is currently occupied by a religious centerpiece of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: the *Haram al-Sharif*, containing the Islamic shrines of the Dome of the Rock, *Al-Aqsa* Mosque (*al-Masjid al-Aqsa*, “the furthest mosque”) and the Dome of the Spirits.<sup>51</sup> The *Haram al-Sharif* is the third holiest shrine in all of Islam next to the two holy cities of Mecca and Medina in Saudi Arabia,

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<sup>48</sup> II Ki. 6, JPS.

<sup>49</sup> *Encyclopædia Britannica 2004 Ultimate Reference Suite DVD*, s.v. “Judaism” [DVD-ROM] (2004).

<sup>50</sup> Gorenberg, 63.

<sup>51</sup> Gorenberg, from “Temple Mount” figure.

and the ruins of the First and Second Temples lie somewhere underneath it. There is an expectation among many religious Zionists that a Third Temple will be built (though there is disagreement about whether this ought to happen before or after the messiah's return, and about whether restoration of the Temple would require the destruction of the *Haram al-Sharif*); that the long-dormant sacrificial system will be renewed; and that the proper practice of Judaism will be possible again for the first time in two millennia. As Gershom Gorenberg wrote, "for a small but growing group of Jews on the Israeli religious right, every day since 1967 has been a missed opportunity to begin building the Third Temple... The Temple Mount is potentially a detonator of full-scale war, and a few people trying to rush the End could set it off."<sup>52</sup>

The second category of scriptural doctrine pertains to the land of Israel itself, promised to Jews by God through Abraham. Even though they did successfully conquer the Promised Land and rule there for centuries, Jewish national life in the land of Israel was eventually interrupted by long periods of exile. Jewish prophets constantly foretold the return of the Jewish Diaspora to Israel from its various places of exile. The prophet Isaiah, who lived during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah during the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., told not only of a return of Jewish exiles but also of a permanent, eternal state of peace and prosperity for Jews in the city of Jerusalem and in Israel at-large. Such scriptures laid the foundation for Jewish expectations not only for national political restoration, but also for a messianic, apocalyptic future where Israel would be restored to her proper place in servitude of God and in unending security.<sup>53</sup> The prophet Jeremiah, who lived in Jerusalem in the waning days of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah before Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, laid the city and the kingdom of Judah to waste, prophesied that the Jews of both Israel and Judah would one day return to their native land from exile.<sup>54</sup> The prophet Zechariah, living in Babylon among his fellow exiled Jews from Judah under the rule of the Persian king Darius in the 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C., also foretold a return of exiles to Israel. The first two chapters of Zechariah detail his vision of God's plan to return the Jewish exiles to Jerusalem and its surrounding

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<sup>52</sup> Gorenberg, 14-15.

<sup>53</sup> Is. 2; 10:20-22; 35; 37:31-32; 51:1-11, JPS.

<sup>54</sup> Jer. 3:12-18; 24:5-7; 31-33, JPS.

Judean environs.<sup>55</sup> In the eighth chapter Zechariah wrote, “Thus said the LORD of hosts: I will rescue My people from the lands of the east and from the lands of the west, and I will bring them home to dwell in Jerusalem. They shall be My people, and I will be their God—in truth and sincerity.”<sup>56</sup>

According to some religious Zionists, the land of Israel was incomplete when the state of Israel was declared in 1948 because Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (the Occupied Territories) were still in Arab hands. However, after the Six Day War in 1967, when the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) took these regions, to include the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, from the Arabs, it seemed that the stage was set for the ultimate fulfillment of prophecy. As Gershom Gorenberg wrote, “for those inclined to hear them, [1948 and 1967 were] divine proclamations that the hour [was] near...the venue for the events [was] Jerusalem—and at its center, the Temple Mount.”<sup>57</sup> For some, these conquests embodied the realization of “the messianic dream [which had persisted] in its pristine purity for a hundred generations.”<sup>58</sup> Completely established in the now fully-redeemed, sovereign land of Israel, the nation could become, as God had intended, “a source of blessing for all nations,” bringing on the time foretold by the prophet Isaiah when “‘the land shall be filled with devotion to the Lord as water covers the sea’ (Isa. 11:9).”<sup>59</sup>

The final realm of scriptural doctrine appropriated by modern Jewish religious extremists regards the messiah (a title taken from the Hebrew word meaning “anointed”) and the millennium (sometimes referred to as the End of Days). This messianism, as previously mentioned, centers around the redeemer promised by God who would one day purge Israel of her shortcomings, restore her national preeminence over other nations and usher in a glorious millennial kingdom. The prophet Isaiah spoke of him as one who would bring “peace without limit upon David’s throne and kingdom” for eternity.<sup>60</sup> In the book of Daniel the angel Gabriel tells Daniel of a messiah who is to come and rule for

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<sup>55</sup> Zech. 1:13-17; 2, JPS.

<sup>56</sup> Zech. 8:7-8, JPS.

<sup>57</sup> Gorenberg, 14.

<sup>58</sup> Aviezer Ravitzky, *Messianism, Zionism, and Jewish Religious Radicalism*, trans. Michael Swirsky and Jonathan Chipman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 1.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Is. 9:5-6, JPS.

a time in a rebuilt Jerusalem.<sup>61</sup> The doctrine of the messiah is perhaps the most nebulous of the three domains discussed here, as the number of texts interpreted to insinuate things about him is significantly greater than the number of those which actually speak of him directly. Despite the imprecision of these prophecies about the advent of messiah, a very dedicated, though not monolithic, pocket of present-day religious Zionist extremists hangs a great weight upon them, expecting his imminent arrival. For some religious Zionist extremists, the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was both a fulfillment of these ancient prophecies and a precursor to the coming of messiah.

Amongst all the scriptural passages enjoining return to and occupation of the land of Israel aside, it cannot be ignored, as has already been detailed in the case of the *Haredim*, that there has also been a centuries-long rabbinical tradition opposed to *aliyah* (Hebrew for “return”) to Israel. The Talmudic proscriptions against *aliyah* issue from a couple of *Torah* passages found in the Song of Solomon and Zechariah, as well as their associated rabbinic traditions. Aviezer Ravitzky cites three oaths imposed by God on Israel, two of which were directly applied by rabbis during the centuries of exile (since 70 AD) who were opposed to the idea of an *aliyah* to Zion. These were: that Jews should “not ascend the wall,” and that they should not “rebel against the nations of the world.”<sup>62</sup> These religious scholars used scriptures about suffering for the sake of the Lord, enjoining Jews to believe that the glory of God had departed Zion and resided with them in exile.<sup>63</sup> They argued further, as will be seen in the case of the *Haredim*, that any *aliyah* was to be brought about by God alone;<sup>64</sup> any effort on the part of Jews to return on their own, even if forced to by secular authorities, ran counter to the will of God.<sup>65</sup>

Nevertheless, all the scripturally derived teachings about the preeminent position of the Jewish people before God, the divine importance of the land of Israel and the expected messiah with his millennial kingdom coalesce to make issues like Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories and the status of Jerusalem, and thus of the

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<sup>61</sup> Dan. 9:25-26, JPS.

<sup>62</sup> Ravitzky, 212.

<sup>63</sup> Ps. 44:23; Hos. 11:9, JPS.

<sup>64</sup> Zech. 4:6, JPS.

<sup>65</sup> Ravitzky, 218-230.

Temple Mount/*Haram al-Sharif*, extremely explosive and radicalizing topics for religious Zionists and their accompanying extremist elements. Of course, as accessible as these teachings are for anyone able to read the *Torah* and *Talmud*, the role of a few influential Jewish rabbis in the interpretation and appropriation of these scriptures for the present day has been colossal, and this is where we turn our attention next.

## 2. Rabbis

### a. *Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook*

Rabbi Avraham Yitzhak Hakohen Kook (also known as Abraham Isaak Kook)—a Lithuanian who came to Palestine in 1904—is regarded by many as one of the preeminent spiritual fathers of religious Zionism, and especially of the Jewish extremist group *Gush Emunim*, which will be discussed later.<sup>66</sup> Central for Kook the Elder (so-called to distinguish him from his son, Tzvi Yehudah) was a devotion to *Torah*. Unlike his Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox brethren, however, he was an avid believer that his fellow Jews needed to recognize documents like the Balfour Declaration as part of God’s planned and promised redemption of Israel.

Kook the Elder lived and worked during a time when secular Zionism was king. He nevertheless saw much that excited his religious expectations for the divine redemption of Israel. In addition to Balfour’s note to Rothschild, U.S. President Wilson’s liberal politics were tilling new soil for national self-determination and the floodgates of immigration had been opened for European Jews to immigrate to Palestine.<sup>67</sup>

Writing from the port city of Jaffa (in what was then part of the Ottoman-ruled Vilayet of Beirut) in 1906 and 1907, Kook the Elder called upon Jews in the Diaspora to “come to the land of Israel, dear brothers...save your souls, the soul of your generations, yea, the soul of our entire nation.”<sup>68</sup> Kook quoted scripture from the prophet Isaiah about the restoration of Jerusalem, telling how his addressees would find joy and restoration in the land of Israel. He denounced Jews who spoke against returning to their

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<sup>66</sup> Gorenberg, 88.

<sup>67</sup> Gideon Aran. “Jewish Zionist Fundamentalism: The Bloc of the Faithful (Gush Emunim),” *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Vol. 1, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 330-331.

<sup>68</sup> Abraham Isaac Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, trans. Tzvi Feldman. (Ma’aleh Adumim, Israel: Ma’alot Publications of Yeshivat Birkat Moshe, 1986), 238.

ancestral home, equating them with the 10 spies that Moses sent to reconnoiter the Promised Land, who returned from their mission expressing grave doubts that it could be taken.<sup>69</sup>

Prior to the release of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, Rabbi Kook wrote an open letter to the *London Times* expressing his view that the national (i.e., secular) and religious aims of Judaism could not be divorced from each other. He cited a Sabbath prayer which reads, ““You [God] are One, and your Name is One; and what nation is like your one people Israel on earth,”” as support for this conviction.<sup>70</sup> Despite his opinion regarding the unity of political and religious Zionist efforts, in a longer letter, Kook related concerns that secular Zionism had potential to supplant the foundational religious duties of learning Hebrew and studying *Torah* in the minds of Jewish youth. He worried that the younger generation of Jews would (and indeed already *had*) begun to abandon the two time-honored foundations in favor of Zionist pursuits as the sole manner of practicing Judaism. Kook disputed the claim of the secular Zionist pioneer Theodor Herzl who claimed before the First Zionist Congress that “Zionism [was] neutral in all religious questions.”<sup>71</sup> In Kook’s estimation, any conception of the Jewish people living as a nation in the land of Israel was eternally tied their observation of the laws and commands of God as laid out in this scripture:

If, then, you faithfully keep all this Instruction [sic] that I command you, loving the LORD [sic] your God, walking in all His [sic] ways, and holding fast to Him, the LORD will dislodge before you all these nations: you will dispossess nations greater and more numerous than you. Every spot on which your foot treads shall be yours; your territory shall extend from the wilderness to the Lebanon and from the River—the Euphrates—to the Western Sea. No man shall stand up to you: the LORD your God will put the dread and the fear of you over the whole land in which you set foot, as He promised you.<sup>72</sup>

Rabbi Kook called upon his fellow Jews, particularly the secular Zionists, to recognize the centrality of “faith and observance of Torah and the

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<sup>69</sup> Num. 13-14, JPS.

<sup>70</sup> Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, 245.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 255-256.

<sup>72</sup> Deut. 11:13-25, JPS.

commandments...[as] a national issue and a principal foundation” of Zionism.<sup>73</sup> Were they to do so, Kook claimed, God would fulfill the scriptural promise, again from Deuteronomy:

‘then the Lord your God will turn your captivity, and will have compassion on you, and will return and gather you from all the nations, amongst whom the Lord they [sic] God has scattered you. If your outcast be at the utmost parts of heaven, from there will the Lord your God gather you, and from there will he fetch you and the Lord your God, [sic] will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it.’<sup>74</sup>

To counter the influence of secular Zionism and appeal to the ultra-Orthodox *Haredim*, Kook the Elder established the “Banner of Jerusalem” (*Degel Yerushalayim*) organization in 1919.<sup>75</sup> Kook used Jerusalem as a central theme for this movement because it “[expressed] the goal of attaining holiness in itself as the highest idealistic tenet of our Jewish existence,” and for its centrality as home to the Temple (he refers to it in the *future* tense) and source of Jewish political and legal authority.<sup>76</sup> As he was writing to the *Haredim*, Kook made skilful use of prophetic scriptures about the promised return of a remnant of Jewish exiles to the land of Israel. To succeed at nation-building in the land of Israel, Jews needed to work in concert and to “walk in the light of the Lord.”<sup>77</sup> To explain the “present wondrous times,” Kook recalled the words of God to the prophet Zechariah, wherein God promised to “cause the remnant of this people to inherit” divine agricultural blessing in their land and ultimately bless all the nations of the earth.<sup>78</sup> Finally, Kook invited Jews everywhere to join the Banner of Jerusalem, citing the prophet Jeremiah: “You that have escaped the sword—which is driving you in all ages through all the lands of your exile—go you, stand not still, remember the Lord from afar and let the memory of Jerusalem rise within your hearts.”<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, 261.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 270.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 271.

<sup>77</sup> Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, 274; also, see Is. 2:5, JPS.

<sup>78</sup> Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, 274-275; also, see Zech. 8:11-13, JPS.

<sup>79</sup> Kook, *Rav A.Y. Kook: Selected Letters*, 275; also, see Jer. 51:50, JPS.

Bezalel Naor, translator of one of Kook the Elder's seminal works, *Orot* ("Lights"), detailed some of Kook's specific plans for the Banner of Jerusalem: he intended it to found "a universal *yeshivah* and a supreme religious court (precursor of a [new] Sanhedrin)" in Jerusalem.<sup>80</sup> Soon after making these proposals, Kook the Elder became the "Rav of Jerusalem" in 1919—a key rabbinical position that situated him amongst a small number of official Jewish religious authorities in pre-1948 Palestine.<sup>81</sup> *Orot* was published between 1919 and 1920 under the auspices of his new office of Rav of Jerusalem—it was essentially the manifesto of the Banner of Jerusalem. The book made a scandalous splash among Kook's rabbinical seniors in Jerusalem, seven of whom came out with an open letter condemning the work for its dangerous enticement of young Jewish *yeshivah* students into the Zionist camp. In it, Kook the Elder argued that "the spirit of the Lord and the spirit of Israel are one," and thus *religious* Jews in particular had no grounds for rejecting the national aims of Zionism.<sup>82</sup> The "Light of Messiah who ingathers exiles" would appear as the Jews in Diaspora returned to the land—essentially, the return to the ancient land had messianic implications, the immanent setting-to-right of the ills of Jews and the world at-large.<sup>83</sup> As the return transpired, God's word to the prophet Jeremiah would be fulfilled: "'there is a reward for your effort, says the Lord, and they shall return from an enemy land...the children will return to their borders.'"<sup>84</sup>

According to Kook the Elder's reading of *Torah*, the Jewish people could not properly fulfill the commands of God given to the patriarch Moses if they did not reside in the Land of Israel. As an example, he cited the command of God in the book of Leviticus to the effect that the priests who made sacrifices for the forgiveness of Israel's sins on the Temple altar were to ensure "'an eternal flame shall burn on the altar, it shall not be extinguished.'"<sup>85</sup> This comprised yet another compelling reason for Jews to return to the land of Israel—nowhere else could they be forgiven of their sins and live once again in a right relationship with God. Kook's millennial view, based upon his

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<sup>80</sup> Abraham Isaac Kook. *Orot*. trans. Bezalel Naor (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993), 10.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 91.

<sup>84</sup> Kook, *Orot*, 91; also, see Jer. 31:15-16, JPS.

<sup>85</sup> Kook, *Orot*, 94; also, see Lev. 6, JPS, especially verse 6.

interpretation of the first four verses of the second chapter of Isaiah, was that the entire earth was “doomed and on its ruins [would] be established a world order of truth and God-consciousness,” an order to be established at the (rebuilt) Temple in Jerusalem where “at the end of days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established...exalted above the hills, and all the nations will stream to it.”<sup>86</sup> These teachings Kook the Elder drew out of ancient Jewish scripture were appropriated by religious Zionists who took them as divine guidance for their task of “redeeming” Gaza, Judea and Samaria (the Occupied Territories) for Israel.

Kook the Elder’s powerful legacy to Jewish religious extremism was that “he modernized religion and ‘nationalized’ it and even rendered modern nationalism a key issue for religion. Yet he did not divorce religion from its old symbols and traditional norms; on the contrary, he gave them a considerable reinforcement.”<sup>87</sup>

**b. Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Hakohen Kook**

Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Hakohen Kook (hereafter called “Kook the Younger”), Abraham Isaak Kook’s son, was the one who took on Kook the Elder’s mantle, disseminating his father’s teachings among a group of disciples whose children eventually became the progenitors of *Gush Emunim* (GE)—“the successors of the Kookist doctrine [who inherited] the declining [secular] Zionism” in the 1970s and 80s.<sup>88</sup> Kook the Younger took over the *Merkaz Harav yeshiva* his father had started and used it to prime his students for the redemption of the whole land of Israel. His students interpreted his public lament about the fractured status of the land just three weeks prior to the ’67 War as prophetic when Israel took Jerusalem and the Temple Mount (along with Gaza, Judea and Samaria) at the end of that conflict. Tzvi Yehudah’s treatise on the outcome of the ’67 War took it “as a miracle embodying all the signs cited by the Prophets and the Halakhic authorities as indicating the coming of the Messiah.”<sup>89</sup>

After the original religious Zionist party in the Israeli government, the National Religious Party (NRP), acquiesced to Prime Minister Menachem Begin’s

<sup>86</sup> Kook, *Orot*, 99; also, see Is. 2:4, JPS.

<sup>87</sup> Aran, 331.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ehud Sprinzak, *The Ascendance of Israel’s Radical Right*. (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 44.

signing of the Camp David Accords with Egypt in 1978, effectively giving the Sinai Peninsula and its settlements back to Egypt, Rabbi Kook the Younger wholeheartedly endorsed the withdrawal of GE members from the legacy NRP to form a new religious party. This new organization, “*Tenuat ha-Tehiya—Brit Ne’emanei Eretz Yisrael* (The Renaissance Movement—The Covenant of the Upholders of the Land of Israel),” would be committed without compromise to acquiring and maintaining, as Kook put, all of *Eretz Yisrael* (“the Land of Israel”) under the umbrella of “the Torah of Yisrael and...the God of Yisrael.”<sup>90</sup> *Tehiya*’s first three Members of Knesset (MKs) went to the Sinai settlement of Yamit in 1981 to demonstrate against “the ‘illegal’ act of the surrender of Israeli territories to the Egyptians;” an act showing greater allegiance to their scripturally-motivated religious principles than to the political body they were serving.<sup>91</sup> *Tehiya* joined the Likud (Begin’s party) to support the Israeli invasion of the Lebanon in 1982—an act that yielded a cabinet minister’s portfolio to one of *Tehiya*’s founding members, Yuval Ne’eman, plus control of the “government settlement committee” and “500 million shekels for new ventures in the West Bank.”<sup>92</sup> So, the simple rabbi and his teachings came to have influence in the highest circles of Israeli government.

Like his father, Kook the younger “saw no line between theology and day-to-day politics.”<sup>93</sup> He believed that the existence of the state of Israel coupled with the successful annexation of Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories in the ’67 War was sufficient evidence that God’s redemption was already occurring. While believing in God’s omnipotent control over human existence, Kook the Younger nonetheless urged his followers to take an active role in bringing God’s plan about. Since God had commanded Israel to take their land in the *Torah*, Kook taught that “the believers’ task was to take possession of the newly conquered land by settling it.”<sup>94</sup> In spite of this religious enthusiasm, however, he joined many other chief rabbis in Israel urging Jews to

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<sup>90</sup> Sprinzak, 78-79.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., 79.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 80.

<sup>93</sup> Gorenberg, 112.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 113.

restrict their religious activities in Jerusalem to the Western Wall (a.k.a., the “Wailing Wall”) and avoid entering the Temple Mount itself.<sup>95</sup>

*c. Rabbi Meir Kahane*

Another more recent stalwart of religious Zionist extremism was Rabbi Meir Kahane. An American Jew from New York, he immigrated to Israel in 1971, where he started the *Kach* party, a religious extremist organization that advocated “expulsion of all Arabs from Israel and the occupied territories...[and erasing] the mosques from the Temple Mount.”<sup>96</sup> Kahane was a racist in addition to being a religious Zionist, and this fact distinguished his movement from those of other religious Zionist extremists.

Kahane was imprisoned by Israeli authorities in 1980 for plotting against the Muslim shrines at the *Haram al-Sharif*. He planned to hit the Dome of the Rock “with a long-range missile”—a plot that would have done little structural harm to them, but would nonetheless have been an incitement of Muslim-Jewish violence.<sup>97</sup> Generally speaking, Kahane was a thug who believed that religious Jews did their best for God when they were strong and stood up against their enemies, even if their actions were less than savory. Of course, in post-Oslo I Israel, Kahane’s call for Jews to band together for self defense have proven largely unnecessary because the need for it “has been realized in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).”<sup>98</sup> Nevertheless, Kahane reserved vitriol for the state of Israel should it prove “unable or unready to react in kind against those who spill ‘so much as one drop of Jewish blood,’” calling upon Israeli citizens themselves to take up arms in such an event.<sup>99</sup> The effectiveness of the IDF in protecting the state and its citizens up to the present, to include the settlements in the Occupied Territories, may explain in part why we have not seen more religious Zionist extremist violence since September 1993. This topic will be discussed further in the next chapter.

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<sup>95</sup> Gorenberg, 114-115.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 128.

<sup>97</sup> Sprinzak, 83.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 235.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

Meir Kahane was an attention-hungry progenitor of violent, racist attitudes and actions toward Palestinians.<sup>100</sup> He went so far as to say that it was “*Hillul Hashem*, a desecration of the name of God” to be afraid of them.<sup>101</sup> Kahane even denounced one of his former heroes, Menachem Begin, after the latter agreed to surrender the Sinai in the Camp David Accords in 1978. This betrayal of scriptural principles caused Kahane to turn his back on the Israeli political process and set himself on a course of violent expression of his extremist doctrines.<sup>102</sup> His scriptural interpretations were “even more rigid” and dogmatic than were those of GE, and they were experiencing increasing popular acceptance even into the early 1990s.<sup>103</sup>

Though Kahane was not the theologian that Kook the Elder was, he nonetheless developed “a cohesive system of religious ideology.”<sup>104</sup> By his own admission, he modeled his life after King David, who “studied every night, and in the morning...would wake up and make war.”<sup>105</sup> Kahane drew very selectively from the *Torah* and held dogmatically to doctrines he chose. A die-hard believer in the inerrancy of scripture, his system of thought left no room for compromise. He viewed God as a “supreme and sovereign warlord who must be totally obeyed,” and as a being who, “if his instructions are carefully followed, He is pleased; if they are disregarded, He gets angry.”<sup>106</sup> Unlike most Jewish scholars, Kahane rarely cited rabbinic traditions in his interpretations of *halakha* (Jewish law), and similarly, the *yeshiva* he started in 1974, the “Center of the Jewish Idea,” existed to push his teachings over those of a longer, older tradition.<sup>107</sup> He held the Arabs responsible for the difficulties faced by Israel and wrote predictions of a Holocaust worse than that perpetrated by the Nazis if the nation of Israel failed its divinely assigned task of rooting out the Arabs from the land and eradicating the

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<sup>100</sup> Sprinzak, 54-56.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 82.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 214.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 216.

*Haram al-Sharif*.<sup>108</sup> Among Kahane's greatest fears was that the Israeli government would follow the egalitarian principles in the state's Declaration of Independence and offer freedom to the Arabs of the region. Kahane believed that this could lead to Arabs eventually out-numbering Jews and taking control of the Knesset, changing Israel to Palestine, cancelling right-of-return for Diaspora Jews and ultimately killing Zionism altogether.<sup>109</sup> The standing scriptural promise of the Promised Land to the Jewish descendants of Abraham and Sarah meant, in Kahane's view, that Israel ought to be "not only...a sovereign state but...[sovereign] over the borders of the entire Eretz Yisrael."<sup>110</sup> This de-legitimized Israel's neighboring Arab lands as "illegal usurpers."<sup>111</sup> He advocated making an offer to the Arabs like that made by Joshua to the Canaanites: "leave the land, fight for it and bear the consequences, or peacefully surrender to the Jews and obtain the status of loyal resident alien."<sup>112</sup>

Meir Kahane was assassinated in New York City on November 5, 1990, but the draw of his scripturally-based, Israeli-centric, anti-Arab activism was evidenced by the 20,000 mourners that attended his funeral in Israel.<sup>113</sup>

***d. Binyamin Kahane***

Binyamin Kahane, son of Rabbi Meir Kahane, carried on his father's work after the elder's assassination. Little is known of him beyond the fact that he founded the group "Kahane Chai," meaning "Kahane Lives," to pick up where Rabbi Kahane's *Kach* group left off. Binyamin and his wife were assassinated in December 2000.<sup>114</sup> His death came at the hands of Palestinian gunmen who fired on Kahane's automobile while he and his spouse were driving near the Palestinian city of Ramallah in the West Bank.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Gorenberg, 128-130.

<sup>109</sup> Sprinzak, 83.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 223.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 225.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 211, 250.

<sup>114</sup> Harvey W. Kushner, *Encyclopedia of Terrorism* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2003), 199.

<sup>115</sup> Benny Morris, *Righteous Victims: A History of the Zionist-Arab Conflict, 1881-2001* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), 669.

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

As has been shown, religious Zionism has from its inception distinguished itself from the secular Zionist movement that was instrumental in founding the state of Israel, though at times it has allied with secular entities for its own self-interests. Foundational scriptural teachings about the divinely-appointed preeminence of the Jewish people ethnically and religiously, about the eternal bequest of the land of Israel to them and about future messianic and millennial events are all part of the equation that has driven religious Zionist extremism in its own path away from secular (and religious) moderates. Enigmatic leaders like the Rabbis Kook and Rabbi Kahane have appropriated these doctrines for the modern Israeli religious Zionist movement, laying the pilings beneath the influential religious Zionist extremist organizations which will be considered in the next chapter.

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### **III. RELIGIOUS ZIONIST GROUPS: FOUNDATIONS, GROUP PROFILES & ACTIVITIES SINCE OSLO I**

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

With age-old religious doctrines and traditions readily available, and living sages to provide guidance, a couple of key religious Zionist extremist groups emerged to bring religious conviction to bear on present circumstances in Israel and the Occupied Territories. *Gush Emunim* (GE) and *Kach* arose in the years following the '67 War and became the vanguard of religious Zionism throughout the 1970s and 1980s. The religious tenets which these groups put hands and feet on have played a both a causal and a sustaining role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict up to the present, inspiring religiously-motivated violence, providing education and ideological safe-harbor for religious Zionist settlers and even wielding key policy-making positions in the Israeli government. Probably the decisive fact on the ground that they have helped create are the Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories (the OT), which the Israeli government has been compelled to defend. Additionally, though both groups have only played isolated roles in religious extremist violence in Israel and the OT since the signing of Oslo I in 1993, they have inspired and supported those religious Zionist individuals and groups who have used violence to oppose peace initiatives and incite the Palestinians.

#### **B. GUSH EMUNIM (GE)**

*Gush Emunim* (GE; “bloc of the faithful”) was called “the most original and influential component of the new [religious] radicalism” in Israel by Ehud Sprinzak, a scholar whose life’s work was to study the Israeli extreme right.<sup>116</sup> Gideon Aran, a professor at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, who studied *Gush Emunim* at length and published the results of his research among members and leaders of the movement in the Occupied Territories wrote that GE has a vested interest in firmly establishing and preserving the Jewish *nation* of Israel in the *land* of Israel. Unlike the secular Zionists, GE’s motivation behind this interest is deeply rooted in religious precepts. The study of *Torah* and pursuit of rigorous religious study is every bit as important to GE as it is to the ultra-Orthodox *Haredim*, but GE considers the conquest of the land as the logical outflow

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<sup>116</sup> Sprinzak, 20.

of this religious zeal. A central religious school for GE supporting its religious pursuits from its inception has been Rabbi Kook the Elder's *Merkaz Harav yeshiva* in Jerusalem.<sup>117</sup> Members of GE see themselves as the heirs of thousands of years of Jewish scripture and tradition; a legacy which demands their active involvement in "redeeming" all of the land of Israel for the Jewish nation. As has already been mentioned,

the chief public manifestation of [GE] is its settlements, the earliest and most important of which were founded contrary to government decision and against the will of significant segments of the Israeli public...[and which represent] a planned effort to force the inclusion of [Judea, Samaria and Gaza] within the boundaries of legitimate Israeli control.<sup>118</sup>

GE's founders were first becoming active between the euphoria that followed the capture of Jerusalem and the Occupied Territories during the 1967 War and the period of national disenchantment that came in the wake of the October 1973 War. The movement's first settlement in the Occupied Territories was established between Bethlehem and Hebron soon after the end of the '67 War by one of Kook the Younger's protégés, Hanan Porat.<sup>119</sup> A second disciple of Tzvi Yehudah Kook, Rabbi Moshe Levinger, and a small group of his followers settled in the city of Hebron in 1968. This was the first of what would eventually amount to well over 100 settlements populated by hundreds of thousands of Jews (many of them GE activists).<sup>120</sup> From humble beginnings in the Sinai Peninsula (before implementation of Israeli-Egyptian peace accords), to the Golan Heights and ultimately to Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), GE busied itself creating new realities with which all sides, from the Israeli government to the Palestinians, were forced to reckon. Even the large present-day settlement of *Maale Adumim* east of Jerusalem was planted by GE activists.<sup>121</sup>

According to Aran, GE is comprised of "an activist core group of observant Jews, mainly yeshiva students, teachers and graduates—young people who number at most

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<sup>117</sup> Aran, 268-269.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 266.

<sup>119</sup> Gorenberg, 113.

<sup>120</sup> Aran, 268-269.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 278-279.

several thousand.”<sup>122</sup> These members come predominantly from middle income *Ashkenazi* families, they are well-educated (often within the *Merkaz Harav yeshiva*) and tend to draw from an age-group who were 25-40 year-olds in the 1970s when GE made its public debut. Adherents of GE have also, because of the insular nature of the settlements and their commitment to *yeshiva* education from the earliest age, built a cradle-to-grave society in which to grow and sustain membership. Issuing from foundations of this nature, GE members are generally very well indoctrinated in their beliefs, and are ready to explain and defend them—this is true of women as well as of men.<sup>123</sup> As of 1991, Aran reported that 15 percent of Israel’s 3.5 million Jews were “religious,” and that among these there was considerable skepticism toward GE. However, he also recorded that support for GE was strong among those of “the hawkish political conception represented by the Likud and factions to the right of it...[comprising] approximately half the Jews in Israel.”<sup>124</sup> A study entitled *Jewish Settler Violence* contained results of a survey of GE members, “60 percent of [whom] state that halakhic precepts represented their predominant settlement motivation,” and who also revealed in their responses “that religious attitudes are far more influential than Zionist views regarding support of ‘serious anti-Government violence.’”<sup>125</sup> It likewise pointed to “a significant link...between a messianic outlook and the sanctioning of vigilante action towards local Arabs.”<sup>126</sup> Though Ehud Sprinzak also corroborated the existence of “hundreds of thousands of Israelis who share the beliefs and orientations of the radical right, almost all,” he said, were ignorant of GE (and Kach’s) religious dogmas, “and precious few [followed] their religious practice.”<sup>127</sup> Despite the appearance of a rather broad base of support, Sprinzak stated in 1991 that the “hard core” of GE settlers—those who were acting truly out of religious convictions—“[did] not exceed 15,000.”<sup>128</sup> Sprinzak revealed that GE’s interpretation of Judaism,

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<sup>122</sup> Aran, 289.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid., 302-308.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid., 327.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., 338-339.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 339.

<sup>127</sup> Sprinzak, 20.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

commands them to sanctify every single acre of land that was promised to Abraham by God. It tells them that they are living in an age of redemption in which they must follow the course of the great biblical conquerors, Joshua and King David, by settling all the territories that were recovered by the Joshuas of our time.<sup>129</sup>

Gideon Aran wrote that “GE’s eschatological vision of the future [foresaw] Israeli sovereignty over all the Land of Israel within its maximum biblical boundaries (from the Euphrates River in Iraq to the Brook of Egypt), and centers on the rebuilt Temple as the focus of both religious and national life.”<sup>130</sup> He continued later by explaining that, “the Six-Day War transformed the whole land of Israel from a distant dream...into an immediate physical and political reality. Thus a messianic principle thousands of years old was inadvertently realized in one fell swoop.”<sup>131</sup> Gershom Gorenberg added that the outcome of the ’67 War, even for non-religious Israeli Jews, increased the market for religious and messianic ideas, making them into “a respected ideology, powering the movement that settled Jews across the West Bank.”<sup>132</sup>

The spiritual fathers of GE were the late Rabbi Abraham Isaak Kook and his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook. Although Kook the Elder did not live to see GE’s birth, his son seized upon the portents of post-’67 War reality in Israel and used them to lay GE’s theological moorings: that the divine redemption of the land and people of Israel began with the establishment of the state of Israel; and that even though the Messiah had not yet manifested himself, the necessary precursors for this were in-place. Kook the Younger also taught that since Israel constituted “the very fulfillment of the messianic ideal, precisely as it was envisioned by the Prophets...reinforcing the Israeli Army [was] a vital religious and spiritual matter, at least equivalent to glorifying the Torah by increasing the number of yeshivas.”<sup>133</sup>

Despite the existence of a seemingly common religious approach to Israeli politics, GE should not be conflated with the right-wing Likud Party in present-day

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<sup>129</sup> Sprinzak, 17-18.

<sup>130</sup> Aran, 268.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 272.

<sup>132</sup> Gorenberg, 111.

<sup>133</sup> Aran, 268.

Israeli politics. The movement came into its own, under secular, Labor governments, and thus predated Likud prominence.<sup>134</sup> The ascendancy of the Likud under Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon in the late 1970s, though it initially appeared to be a boon for GE, actually complicated things considerably for the movement. Likud initially exploited its common ground with GE, turning the settlement movement into a boomtown prospect. However, sharing exposure with the Israeli government on the national stage threatened to marginalize GE altogether. GE did benefit from Likud being in power. It effectively became part of the establishment, gaining cabinet portfolios, political offices, government bureaucracies and “established organic units of settlers [within the IDF], with their own arms and command, [which dealt] with their Palestinian neighbors both within and outside the limits of their military authority.”<sup>135</sup>

Nevertheless, Likud government brought GE to a crisis point. The 1978 Camp David Accords with Egypt signed by the Likud government dashed GE’s hopes.<sup>136</sup> Withdrawal from the Yamit settlement in Sinai coupled with Israel’s turn away from the Likud after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 thrust GE to the margins and tilled fallow ground for extreme elements within GE to take matters into their own hands. A sub-group of GE known as the “Jewish Underground in the Territories”—perhaps drawing a parallel to the armed Jewish gangs who fought the Nazis in Occupied Europe—began taking their battle to the Palestinians, targeting local officials, murdering Islamic students, conspiring in bomb attacks on Palestinian buses and ultimately a “plot to blow up the mosques on the Temple Mount.”<sup>137</sup>

The 1987 Palestinian *Intifada* brought GE back to the fore, and in the course of doing so cemented the reality that the Jewish settlers’ struggle was not just with the secular Israeli government but also “with the neighboring Arab population.”<sup>138</sup> GE derived legitimacy, though not without internal debate, for their war against Palestinian Arabs by citing “the biblical account of Simeon and Levi, the sons of Jacob, who

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<sup>134</sup> Aran, 289.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., 283.

<sup>136</sup> Aran, 284; Sprinzak, 71-72.

<sup>137</sup> Aran, 284.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., 285.

slaughtered all the inhabitants of Shechem in retribution for the rape of their sister, Dinah.”<sup>139</sup> The application of ancient scriptural precedent and principles to modern problems was, of course, well-accepted among GE adherents. This often put GE at odds with even more conservative ultra-Orthodox Jews who interpreted these historical examples differently. GE looked to “a forum of GE rabbis, most of whom were settlers themselves and all of whom were followers of the Rabbis Kook and associated with the Merkaz Harav yeshiva.”<sup>140</sup> This forum would convene to consider all manner of questions in the light of their interpretation of *Torah*: from whether the unity of all Jews or securing the land of Israel was more important, to whether Jewish law allowed for killing Palestinians, to whether or not journalists covering events in the Occupied Territories were legitimate targets, to ascertaining whether it was permissible to assist Palestinian Arab collaborators.<sup>141</sup>

As previously mentioned, GE has been committed to reclaiming the *whole* land of Israel as defined in the *Torah* for the Jewish people. It was “a divine precept,” whose origins were founded on scripture.<sup>142</sup>

’you shall dispossess all the inhabitants of the land... And you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have assigned the land to you to possess... But if you do not possess the land, those whom you allow to remain shall be stings in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land in which you live; so that I will do to you what I planned to do to them.’<sup>143</sup>

When the LORD your God brings you to the land that you are about to enter and possess, and He dislodges many nations before you...seven nations much larger than you—and the LORD your God delivers them to you and you defeat them, you must doom them to destruction: grant them no terms and give them no quarter.<sup>144</sup>

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun... ‘Prepare to cross the Jordan, together with all this people, into the land that I am giving to the Israelites. Every spot on

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<sup>139</sup> Aran, 286; also, see Gen. 34, JPS.

<sup>140</sup> Aran, 287.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., 287-288.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>143</sup> Num. 33:52-53, 55-56, JPS>

<sup>144</sup> Deut. 7:1-2, JPS.

which your foot treads I give to you as I promised Moses. Your territory shall extend from the wilderness and the Lebanon to the Great River, the Euphrates...and up to the Mediterranean Sea on the west.<sup>145</sup>

Obviously, if the members of GE were to follow all these commands to the letter prospects for their support of any peace agreement with Palestinians reserving anything less than *all* of the biblical land of Israel to the Jews are nil. From the perspective of a scripture-based Zionist group like GE, the national identity of the Arab party to peace negotiations, be it Jordanian, Syrian, Egyptian, Lebanese or Palestinian, is immaterial. Aran paints the picture this way:

The claims of the other side are considered irrelevant and its rights are in principle unrecognized, regardless of their content. Decision making should not consider the other side, since affairs between Israel and the Gentiles are of no account, only those between Israel and itself. Peace is exclusively a Jewish matter. Middle East politics in general are only a secondary concern. Peace is something between the nation and its God, between Israel, the Torah, and faith—not a complex web of diplomatic or strategic relations between communities and states but rather a spiritual orientation toward the sacred. Once this fundamental principle is acknowledged, everything else will fall into place of itself.<sup>146</sup>

The penultimate goal of GE (not to mention of its fellow Jewish religious extremist groups as well) “is the worship of God in the Holy Temple, standing intact on its original site.”<sup>147</sup> Palestinian claims on former lands in Israel and all other extant religious animosities between Muslims and Jews aside, this final expectation of GE has perhaps the greatest potential to ignite a full-scale holy war. This yearning for the Temple is not unique to GE amongst Jewish religious extremist organizations, though it could be argued that they helped establish the issue as a central theme of religious Zionism. For GE, actions by the Israeli government to ratify and implement treaties withdrawing from and returning land to Arabs is viewed as much more than a tactical or strategic error, it amounts to “sin from the Jewish perspective, and...spiritual and physical suicide.”<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Jos. 1:1-4, JPS.

<sup>146</sup> Aran, 315.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., 317.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., 326.

It may seem odd that since the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) signed the Oslo I peace agreement, GE has not claimed responsibility for violent acts protesting the accord. Nevertheless, GE was the standard bearer for one of the largest sticking points in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza (the Occupied Territories). These settlements were home to 238,300 Israelis as of 2005, according to the *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2005*.<sup>149</sup> At first glance, this may not seem to be an overwhelming number, especially considering that the number should have decreased by approximately 8,500 concurrent with the June 2005 Israeli evacuation of all Gaza and a handful of West Bank settlements.<sup>150</sup> However, this cantankerous issue is far from settled. According to the Israeli government's own records, the population of Judea, Samaria and Gaza, a meager 1,500 at the first official count in 1972, increased nearly 16 times to 23,700 in 1983, and then expanded again by more than five times to 134,300 by 1995.<sup>151</sup> These numbers do not account for those Israeli settlers who have moved into formerly Arab-controlled parts of East Jerusalem—Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics records only divide the Jewish population of Jerusalem between the “Judean Foothills” and “Judean Mountains.”<sup>152</sup> Even without including East Jerusalem in the equation, the 2005 settler population of 238,300 is nearly double the 1995 count—evidence that the legacy of the religiously-inspired Jewish settlement movement (as cited previously by Gideon Aran) has taken on a life of its own, expanding in spite of the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations inaugurated in 1993.

### C. KACH & KAHANE CHAI

*Kach*, meaning “Thus!” in Hebrew, was the renamed Israeli version of Rabbi Meir Kahane’s Jewish Defense League (JDL), adopting the new moniker in 1975.<sup>153</sup> From Kahane’s base in the settlement of Kiryat Arba, *Kach* embarked upon a program of

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<sup>149</sup> Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, “Localities and Population, by Population Group, District, Sub-District and Natural Region,” *Statistical Abstract of Israel 2005*, No. 56, Item 2.8, pg. 46 [database online]; available from [http://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton56/st02\\_08.pdf](http://www1.cbs.gov.il/shnaton56/st02_08.pdf); Internet; accessed 6 March 2006.

<sup>150</sup> “Israeli Settler Eviction Complete,” *BBC News, International Version*, August 23, 2005 [online news]; available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4177364.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4177364.stm); Internet; accessed 6 March 2006.

<sup>151</sup> Israel, Central Bureau of Statistics, “Localities and Population, by Population Group, District, Sub-District and Natural Region,” 46.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>153</sup> Sprinzak, 81.

violence against the Palestinian Arabs, one Kahane hoped would distinguish it from religious organizations like the NRP, which supported conceding land for peace with the Arabs, and even from hard-line organizations such as GE. Though *Kach* sought to enter the Israeli political process, in the 1984 elections (13 years after Meir Kahane came to Israel) they managed to garner only 1 seat (representing 1.3 percent of Israeli voters) in the Knesset.<sup>154</sup> This seems a small victory indeed, but the confluence of forces that led to the single *Kach* seat for Meir Kahane in the Knesset was significant.

Israelis saw, or perceived, an escalating loss of low-income jobs to Israeli and Palestinian Arabs, the same Arabs who seemed increasingly enamored with the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) and its goal of making the Jewish state of Israel a thing of the past.<sup>155</sup> This greatly increased the magnetism of *Kach* and its ideology. The popularity of Kach's stance as seen from Kahane's election to the Knesset showed broadening support for Kahane's idea "that Palestinians should be deported to Arab countries and Israeli Arabs induced to emigrate."<sup>156</sup> As Ehud Sprinzak put it, "Kach people have never concealed their hope for a massive emigration" of Arabs out of Israel and the Occupied Territories.<sup>157</sup> Arabs remaining or emigrating notwithstanding, *Kach* pursued policies of baiting and terrorizing them long before the First *Intifada* kicked off in the late 1980s.

Bernard Avishai situated the first of *Kach*'s outright provocations of the Palestinians—Rabbi Kahane's attempted bombing at the *Haram al-Sharif* in April 1982, more than five years before the start of the *Intifada*—as an event that came on the heels of several months of Israeli annexation of Arab territories and meddling in Arab politics, as well as massive Palestinian uprisings.<sup>158</sup> The organization seemingly had a knack for knowing when to stir the pot. Of course, *Kach*'s anti-Palestinian operations redoubled

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<sup>154</sup> Gorenberg, 131.

<sup>155</sup> Sprinzak, 87.

<sup>156</sup> Bernard Avishai, *The Tragedy of Zionism: Revolution and Democracy in the Land Of Israel* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1985), 329.

<sup>157</sup> Sprinzak, 237.

<sup>158</sup> Avishai, 292.

after the First *Intifada* began. It began killing Arabs out of the conviction “that the decisive battle for Eretz Yisrael [had] already started.”<sup>159</sup>

Concerns about Kach and the popularity of Rabbi Kahane’s views impacted more than the Palestinians. When Kahane was elected to the Knesset, the Chief of Staff of the IDF undertook “an emergency program to teach recruits about the ‘virtues of democracy’” as a means to counter the growing influence of right-wing views on Zionism and the land of Israel.<sup>160</sup>

Gideon Aran claimed that *Kach* enjoyed some membership crossover with GE, though he stopped shy of claiming any formal ties between the two groups.<sup>161</sup> Despite this lack of formal ties with the Kookist settler organization, important individuals within Kach were former disciples of Kook the Younger, and as has already been mentioned, “the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, founded by Kook followers, [had become] a center for Kahane supporters.”<sup>162</sup> It was, in fact, the increasing radicalism of groups like GE and the success of religious extremist political parties such as *Tehiya* in the mid-1980s that precipitated the ground swell of support for Kach in the elections. This wave of popularity culminated in the Israeli government’s rescission of its prohibition against Rabbi Kahane’s involvement in Israeli politics.<sup>163</sup>

While he was alive, Kahane exercised tight control over Kach, even from prison. Only in Kiryat Arba, the settlement where Kahane lived, was there a sufficient number of Kach members to undertake activities and political activity not directly involving Rabbi Kahane.<sup>164</sup> Ehud Sprinzak pegged total Kach membership at no more than “a few dozens [sic] activists...who can be said to act out of fundamentalist motivations.”<sup>165</sup> However, even after Kach was banned from Israeli politics in 1988, its *activist* confrontations with

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<sup>159</sup> Sprinzak, 237.

<sup>160</sup> Avishai, 337.

<sup>161</sup> Aran, 318.

<sup>162</sup> Gorenberg, 130.

<sup>163</sup> Sprinzak, 87.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., 213.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., 20.

Palestinian Arabs in contrast to the comparatively benign activities of GE and *Tehiya* (which focused principally on settlements in the OT) still resonated with many Israelis.<sup>166</sup>

The *Terrorism Knowledge Base* (TKB), an online research and analysis clearinghouse which collates worldwide terrorism-related data collected by the United States Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the National Counterterrorism Center (NCTC), DFI International, the RAND Corporation and the University of Arkansas, claims that though it “has not officially claimed many attacks since being outlawed, Kach praises and supports any violence against Arabs.”<sup>167</sup> Within the last year, Kach members have been accused by Israel prime minister Ariel Sharon of making threats against members of the government surrounding Israel’s now-completed evacuation of Gaza Strip settlements. The prime minister also warned of the potential for “bloodshed” as a result of confrontations fomented by groups like *Kach* which are opposed to Israeli withdrawal from settlements.<sup>168</sup>

As mentioned in the brief treatment of Binyamin Kahane, *Kahane Chai*, the *Kach* spinoff group he founded after his father’s assassination in 1990, carried on Kach’s extremist policies. *Kahane Chai*’s principal objective is declared to be “[restoring] the biblical state of Israel [by] replacing democracy with theocracy.”<sup>169</sup> Formally banned in Israel along with *Kach* under the 1948 Terrorism Law, *Kahane Chai* has nevertheless made its presence felt in Israel and in the West Bank. Though their typical activities have centered more around criminal activity, Baruch Goldstein, perpetrator of the February 1994 Ibrahimi mosque massacre in Hebron was listed as “a staunch Kahane Chai supporter.”<sup>170</sup> According to the TKB, though *Kach* and *Kahane Chai* are technically separate organizations, “Kahane Chai is essentially an alias for Kach as the two groups have a shared core leadership and are referred to interchangeably in the media.”<sup>171</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Sprinzak, 211.

<sup>167</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Group Profile: Kach,” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=61>; Internet; accessed 17 February 2006.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Kushner, 199.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid.

<sup>171</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Group Profile: Kahane Chai,” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3750>; Internet; accessed 17 February 2006.

Though there were personality conflicts between Binyamin Kahane and the leaders of his father's legacy group at one point, those disputes evaporated with Binyamin's assassination in 2000.<sup>172</sup>

The group is still very active in recruitment, in condemnation of the Israeli government and in its efforts to have the government ban on its political activities lifted. Like *Kach*, *Kahane Chai* has threatened to assassinate Israeli politicians who support disengagement plans in the Occupied Territories, as well as to destroy elements of Israeli national infrastructure in retaliation for implementation of any such plan.<sup>173</sup> Though *Kach* and *Kahane Chai* have only committed a handful of violent acts since 1993 (four, to be exact), Baruch Goldstein's murder of 39 Palestinian Muslim worshippers and injury of more than 250 others who were praying in a mosque at a shared Jewish-Muslim holy site was extremely provocative.<sup>174</sup> Goldstein was not alone in sentiment, though he may have been in action. Noteworthy troublemakers such as Yoel Lerner and Yisrael Ariel praised his exploit.<sup>175</sup> Though it was not perpetrated by either group, peace-minded Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's 1995 assassination by a lone religious Zionist extremist, Yigal Amir, who was a known *Kach* "sympathizer" is illustrative of the impact potential of even such small, outlawed religious extremist organizations as *Kach* (and *Kahane Chai*).<sup>176</sup> In 1998, *Kach* was again implicated in violence, this time against its fellow countrymen—Israeli police alleged that *Kach* members burned the car of an Israeli MK (Member of Knesset) who was trying to get a shrine erected at Baruch Goldstein's grave removed.<sup>177</sup> After this incident, *Kach* was silent until 2002, when group activists were involved in stoning Palestinians' vehicles in Jerusalem.<sup>178</sup> No overt acts of

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<sup>172</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Group Profile: Kahane Chai."

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Incident Profile: Kach Attacked Religious Figures/Institutions Target (Feb. 24, 1994, West Bank/Gaza)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=7302>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>175</sup> Gorenberg, 203-205, 207.

<sup>176</sup> Kushner, 199.

<sup>177</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Incident Profile: Kach Attacked Government Target (Oct. 7, 1998, West Bank/Gaza)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=15617>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>178</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Incident Profile: Kach Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Mar. 2, 2002, Israel)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=9484>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

violence have been attributed to *Kach* or *Kahane Chai* since 2002—the groups’ primary activities in the present day seem, as already mentioned, to focus inward on opposing further surrender of territory in Judea and Samaria.

#### **D. OTHER GROUPS**

This nebulous category of “other” Jewish religious extremists contains what Ehud Sprinzak refers to as “cultural radicals;” those “who ideologically and politically stand somewhere between Gush Emunim and Rabbi Kahane, but feel uncomfortable with both.”<sup>179</sup> Individuals or groups who fall into this category do not act in concert with one another, though they do “share the conviction that only a spiritual revolution could save the nation.”<sup>180</sup> The real ideological power of these groups lies in the legitimacy they derive from being rabbi-led, versus acting alone. Groups in this category, whether they are or are not affiliated with the principal actors in the religious Zionist camp, have all the same operated in pursuit of many of the same goals for religious reasons. In both respects, these cultural radicals have a bent toward engaging in violence to block peace efforts or attack Arabs with or without encouragement from GE or followers of Kahane.

One organization, known originally as the “Committee for the Preservation of Security,” was founded by *Kach* members in 1986 simply to protect roads used by Israeli settlers in the Occupied Territories from rock-throwing Palestinians.<sup>181</sup> However, during the First *Intifada*, the organization “became a most aggressive vigilante group.”<sup>182</sup> TKB’s data on the “Committee for Security of the Highways” claims the group first surfaced in 1998, attacking the Palestinian Police in Hebron and Bethlehem,<sup>183</sup> and then was dormant until 2001, when it was responsible for the deaths of three Palestinians and

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<sup>179</sup> Sprinzak, 251.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid. 237.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid.

<sup>183</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*. “Incident Profile: Committee for the Security of the Highways Attacked Police Target (July 5, 1998, West Bank/Gaza).” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=11608>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006; *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*. “Incident Profile: Committee for the Security of the Highways Attacked Police Target (July 15, 1998, West Bank/Gaza).” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=11607>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

the injury of seven others in two separate incidents.<sup>184</sup> The Committee has not claimed responsibility for any violent acts since July 2001. So, while its *Kach* forebear remains, the Committee seems to have either dissolved back into the ranks of its parent organization or gone entirely underground.<sup>185</sup>

A final example of such a group has been referred to by the Israeli press as “the Jewish Underground,”<sup>186</sup> and by the United States State Department as the “New Jewish Underground.”<sup>187</sup> The State Department’s *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* reported that an Israeli was tried and convicted in December 2004 for membership in this “terrorist organization that aimed to carry out attacks on Arab civilians;” one whose name hearkens back to another group that operated under the same moniker in the 1980s.<sup>188</sup> A chief participant and “ideologue of the Jewish underground in the Territories”<sup>189</sup> in its early days, Yehudah Etzion, was part of a highly secretive mid-1980s plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock.<sup>190</sup> Etzion was jailed in Israel both for the attempt on the Dome of the Rock and for his involvement in attempts to maim Palestinian politicians.<sup>191</sup> He founded Ofrah, one of GE’s early settlements in the West Bank, with the help of a few GE acquaintances in 1974.<sup>192</sup> His involvement in terrorist acts sprang from his conviction that the Muslim shrines on the Temple Mount were the primary obstacle behind “God’s refusal to move forward with redemption” as promised in the scriptures. He believed the shrines constituted a “desecration” of God’s holy hill, an idea he may have gotten from

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<sup>184</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Profile: Committee for the Security of the Highways Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Apr. 3, 2001, West Bank/Gaza),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=8350>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006; MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Profile: Committee for the Security of the Highways Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (July 20, 2001, West Bank/Gaza),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=8784>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

<sup>185</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Group Profile: Committee for Security of the Highways,” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3500>; Internet; accessed 16 February 2006.

<sup>186</sup> Sprinzak, 252-253.

<sup>187</sup> U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Terrorism 2004* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2005), 64.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Aran, 320.

<sup>190</sup> Sprinzak, 253.

<sup>191</sup> Aran, 320.

<sup>192</sup> Gorenberg, 113-114.

the book of Daniel.<sup>193</sup> More recently, Etzion established a group called “Everlasting” (*Hai Vekayam*) whose activities focus on reasserting Israeli control of the Temple Mount and reinstating Jewish worship there. It works in concert with the Temple Institute, founded by Rabbi Yisrael Ariel, and the Temple Mount Faithful, led by Gershon Salomon, in the effort to raise awareness of the cause amongst the Israeli public.<sup>194</sup> Etzion’s voice was loud enough even to secure a campaign promise from former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount.<sup>195</sup> So, in yet another case, religious Zionists in a new generation are utilizing the doctrines and even the names of 1970s and 1980s religious Zionist organizations, while key leaders of the groups from the pre-Oslo I period continue their activities to secure permanent Jewish sovereignty over all of the land of Israel.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

The beliefs and actions of the religious Zionist extremist organizations detailed in this chapter have been elemental complicating factors in the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict; particularly since the Oslo I agreement was signed in September 1993. The settlement activities of GE in Gaza, Judea and Samaria have constituted one of the single most complicated realities to circumnavigate for parties desiring a peaceful resolution of the conflict. GE-initiated settlements have grown exponentially, experiencing some of their largest growth periods in the time since Oslo I. These have presented the Palestinians with *faits accompli* in the middle of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, lands they desire to be part of an independent Palestinian state. Kach and Kahane Chai’s extreme agendas, though they have been outlawed, have played themselves out in at least two of the most violent, impact-laden atrocities committed by Jewish groups in the post-Oslo I era: the Ibrahimi mosque massacre, and the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, who was actively pursuing peace with Israel’s Arab neighbors. Extremists hailing from or sympathizing with the aims of GE and Kach have also targeted the highly contentious Muslim holy shrine that dominates the real estate formerly occupied by the Jewish Temple, actions that threatened to ignite a holy war. In aggregate, these religious factors

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<sup>193</sup> Dan. 11:31, JPS; Gorenberg, 117, 132-137.

<sup>194</sup> Gorenberg, 9, 139-142.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., 239.

have represented tangible quandaries for peace negotiators by baiting the Palestinians and by placing the Israeli government in the difficult position between defending its citizens and territory on the one hand, and taking action antithetical to good faith peace negotiations in so doing on the other.

## IV. PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC EXTREMISM

### A. INTRODUCTION

It is now time to consider how religion has played a guiding and sustaining role for Muslim extremists in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. What is it within Islam that has radicalized individual Palestinian Muslims against the prospect of peace with Israel? Are there canonical doctrines in Islamic scripture that predispose religious extremists to violently oppose a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on any terms other than the destruction of Israel? If such doctrines exist, who has interpreted and propagated them for the believers? In this chapter, we will first consider a brief history of Islamic extremism among the Palestinians leading up to the emergence of the principal Palestinian Islamic extremist groups in the 1970s and 1980s. Next, we will look into scripture in search of teachings and themes which might be applied to the conflict, followed by an examination of the principal religious authorities which have interpreted applied these scriptures for the post-Oslo I generation.

Similar to what was found in the case of religious Zionism, the reader will find that Palestinian Islamic extremists are opposed to peace with Israel, motivated by religious doctrines portraying Jews as polluters of true religion, the state of Israel as a blight on the house of Islam, Israeli sovereignty over the *Haram al-Sharif* as an abomination to Allah and the entire land of Palestine as a divinely-appointed religious trust (*waqf*) from Allah to the Muslims which has been stolen from them by the Jews and their allies in the West.

Once again, the answer to the scriptural-basis question, this time for Islamic religious extremism, is of utmost importance to any party involved in trying to bring an end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Islamic extremist organizations, subscribing to scriptural doctrines and yielding only to divine authority, have increasingly engaged in acts of violence against Israelis with the expressed purpose of feeding the growing vortex of bad blood and mistrust, and reiterating their positions of abject refusal to accept the existence of any Jewish or Israeli state.

Islam is the youngest of the three great monotheistic faiths, and its birth and development starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. was heavily impacted by the earlier emergence of Judaism and Christianity. The scriptural texts of the three religions are littered with references to common patriarchs, prophets and doctrines covering broad areas of life and religious practice. As a younger sibling would, however, Islam also makes pointed references to its uniqueness from its seniors, claiming ultimately that it both fulfills and supersedes them. Not surprisingly, these latter claims, found in the monumental texts of the *Qur'an* and *Hadith*, as well as other writings, create vast open spaces for conflict, both ideological and physical, between Islam and, in this case, Judaism. Muslims who take their religious beliefs to the extreme have a full arsenal of doctrines from which to draw guidance and moral support in their struggle against Jews. Nowhere is this phenomenon more prevalent than in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### **B. ROOTS OF PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC EXTREMISM**

Opposition to the state of Israel has been a calling-card of Palestinian Islamic extremists since long before Israel proclaimed its independence in 1948. As early as the 1920s, Islamic militants were actively opposing the Zionist movement that established the state of Israel. ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam was the highest profile martyr of the Islamic cause, killed by the British in 1935 while leading *al-Kaff al-Aswad* (“the Black Hand”) in a *Jihad* against the Zionists and the British.<sup>196</sup> It is not difficult to understand that hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, displaced by the renascent Jewish state, and their descendants would yearn to have their land back. Palestinian Arabs, who existed peacefully for hundreds of years under the suzerainty of the Ottoman Turks, were caught unprepared and disorganized by immigrating Jews, some of whom were eager to reestablish the land of their ancestors, and others who simply sought refuge from persecution in Europe and other parts of the world. Bereft of land, livelihood and the opportunity for salient participation in the political process that governed their daily lives, Palestinians were instead relegated to isolated pockets in what was once the British Mandate of Palestine, or to refugee camps, or else were set adrift in the nations of Arab neighbors who fought in their defense one day, and tried to dump them off on some other country the next. During this *Nekba* (“catastrophe”), the Palestinians lived largely under

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<sup>196</sup> Raphael Israeli, *Muslim Fundamentalism in Israel* (London: Brassey's, 1993), 16.

the leadership of secular nationalist movements like the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), whose *Fatah* party ran the Palestinian Authority (PA) until very recently, to govern them, provide basic goods and services and sue for their rights against what they viewed as an usurping foreign state.

Into this fray came Sunni Muslim organizations like the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (*Haraket al-Jihad al-Islami fi Filastin*, or PIJ) and the Islamic Resistance Movement (*Haraket al-Muqawmat ul-Islamiyya*, or *Hamas*), offering an alternative to PLO and PA services and adopting terrorist tactics to fight a *Jihad* against the Israelis. Certainly these groups were born out of a genuine desire to aid Palestinians. They may have also foreseen an opportunity to capitalize on the political vacuum created by the failures of the PA and surrounding Arab states. Whatever the case, the groups also came preaching a religious message that resonated with Palestinian Muslims, one which it will be argued here has been a prime mover driving both organizations, as well as their offshoots and subsidiaries, in their ongoing *Jihad* to eradicate the state of Israel and replace it with an Islamic state of Palestine.

The ancestral organization from which the majority of Palestinian Islamic extremist groups like the PIJ and *Hamas* stemmed is the Muslim Brotherhood (MB), which first appeared in Egypt under the leadership of a teacher named Hasan al-Banna. The MB started small in 1928, with al-Banna and only six followers; however, by the end of its eleventh year of existence, estimated membership in the brotherhood was 500,000. The growth of the organization was sufficient that by 1953, it was reckoned to have over two million members in Egypt alone.<sup>197</sup> The national life advocated by the MB was to be based upon Islamic principles, in order to restore the religion's long-lost preeminence in government and society. 1920s Egypt where the MB started was still very much embroiled in struggle with de facto British occupation. This state of affairs—a predominantly Muslim land ruled by a nominally Christian imperial power—was detestable to MB founders and formed the backdrop for their emergence. In spite of the MB's Egyptian origins, their ideals and influence spread throughout the Arab Muslim world, resonating with Palestinian Arabs in their struggle against the British mandatory

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<sup>197</sup> Christina Phelps Harris, *Nationalism and Revolution in Egypt: The Role of the Muslim Brotherhood* (CT: Hyperion Press, 1981), 159.

regime and Zionist immigrants between the 1920s Ottoman implosion and 1947.<sup>198</sup> The first official MB branch in Palestine was founded 1946.<sup>199</sup>

The MB's all-encompassing, back-to-basics Islamic approach gained considerable luster among downtrodden and disenfranchised Palestinians in the OT in the 1980s. Cast opposite the corrupt and ineffective PLO in the OT, the Islamist appeal became that much more compelling. It also did not hurt the MB cause that the Israelis themselves had been tacitly supporting and allowing them leeway to move and organize since the late 1970s, a policy motivated by a desire to prevent the PLO from consolidating control, rather than any genuine Israeli desire to see the MB succeed *in place of* the PLO.<sup>200</sup>

As will be shown, the MB provided the structural and religious framework from which Islamic extremist groups like *Hamas*, the PIJ and their progeny emerged. This is not to suggest that groups of this nature could not have formed independent of MB origins, but rather to highlight the centrality of the MB in the religious roots of many of the most violent Islamic extremist organizations operating in Palestine today.

### **C. SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATIONS & TEACHINGS OF RELIGIOUS EXTREMIST LEADERS**

It is critical to our study to consider the role Islamic scriptures and religious teachers have played (and continue to play) in giving Palestinian Islamic extremists religious cause for their opposition to peace with Israel. Richard Landes, Director of the Center for Millennial Studies (CMS) at Boston University, describes Islamic extremism as evidence of “revival movements that seek to return to the ‘fundamentals’ of the faith: Sharia (Islamic law), strict observances and purity concerns, and an implacably hostile attitude towards the secular world that undermines such efforts.”<sup>201</sup> In the Islamic extremist idiom, the rise of the state of Israel has established a beachhead for Western corruption and secularism in the heart of Islam. In the broadest sense, the war with Israel and the West is a physical manifestation of a larger spiritual reality that was foretold by

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<sup>198</sup> Albert Hourani, *A History of the Arab Peoples* (New York: Warner Books, 1992), 348-9.

<sup>199</sup> Harris, 159.

<sup>200</sup> Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict, 5<sup>th</sup> edition.* (New York: St. Martin's, 2004), 406.

<sup>201</sup> Richard Landes, *Apocalyptic Islam and Bin Laden* [database online]; available from [http://www.mille.org/people/rhpages/Bin\\_Laden.html](http://www.mille.org/people/rhpages/Bin_Laden.html); Internet; accessed 16 January 2006.

the Prophet at the dawn of Islam. Far more than an argument about borders, Palestinian statehood, or any other secular consideration, this war is one with a strong scriptural basis and eternal implications, making it obligatory for all *true* Muslims to join the fight.<sup>202</sup> The *Qur'an* and *Ahadith* (plural of *Hadith*, Arabic for a tradition, act or saying of the Prophet Muhammad) together comprise this canon of Islamic scripture. Of the two, the *Qur'an* is the text universally recognized across the *Dar al-Islam* (“house of Islam”), and will thus be the primary source for the first part of our study.<sup>203</sup> After considering scripture, we will continue by looking at the key individuals who have interpreted these texts and appropriated them for Palestinian Islamic extremists. At the conclusion of this section, the evidence will have shown that Islamic scriptures and religious teachers have provided profuse incitement to the religious extremists who have fomented violence in an effort to sustain the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

### 1. Islamic Scriptures

Within the body of Islamic scripture, there are two major areas of doctrine possessing immediate applicability for Islamic extremists in their approach the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. These are: teachings about the Jews themselves—their rejection of the Prophet and his message, their standing before Allah comparative to the Muslims and their place in the narrative of the apocalypse—and teachings surrounding the significance of the *Haram al-Sharif*.

At first glance, certain statements about Jews in the *Qur'an* seem to indicate that Muhammad “allow[ed] the very real possibility that...[they had] a place in the pan-monotheistic creed.”<sup>204</sup> The *Qur'an* also corroborates, in a very loose sense, much of Jewish religious history and prophetic tradition, containing reference to no less than 46 personages also found in the Jewish *Tanakh* (Bible), and recording countless other common doctrines, places and events. However, as one can see from an examination of the differing accounts of these various personages that the *Qur'an* (the younger of the two scriptures by several centuries) contains many unexplained additions, omissions and

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<sup>202</sup> Landes, *Apocalyptic Islam and Bin Laden*.

<sup>203</sup> Israeli, 91.

<sup>204</sup> David B. Cook, *The Beginnings of Islam as an Apocalyptic Movement* [database online]; available from <http://www.mille.org/publications/winter2001/cook.html>; Internet; accessed 16 January 2006.

alterations on the *Tanakh* storylines.<sup>205</sup> This inter-faith scriptural discord is explained away in the *Qur'an*—though without proofs or explanations—in one of its chief indictments of the Jews: they changed the *Torah* from what Allah intended it to say, thus leaving it to the *Qur'an* to set things right.<sup>206</sup> This theme will be developed further. In the meantime, the attitude toward Jews goes downhill from these benign doctrines.

Islamic scriptures address the Jewish people pejoratively countless times. The majority of the *Qur'an* gives them little quarter, stating at one point that: “you will find the most hostile people to the [Muslim] believers to be the Jews and the polytheists.”<sup>207</sup> In the preface to the 2002 edition of his book, *End of Days*, Gershom Gorenberg quotes ‘Usama bin Laden saying this about Jews:

We are sure of Allah's victory and our victory against the Americans and the Jews, as promised by the Prophet, peace be upon him: 'Judgment Day shall not come until the Muslims fight the Jews, where the Jews will hide behind trees and stones, and the tree and the stone will speak and say, 'Muslim, behind me is a Jew. Come and kill him.'<sup>208</sup>

This quotation—a *Hadith* of the Prophet Muhammad—was cited by bin Laden in a 1998 interview with ABC News. The particular *Hadith* he used “testifies that the contemporary conflict with Israel was foretold at the dawn of Islam...that the victory of the Muslims is assured and that nature itself will join the battle on their side.”<sup>209</sup> Here, through the rare invective reserved for them, one begins to see how Jews are viewed as a principal adversary of Islam. Bin Laden’s *Hadith* quotation is one example of this; another is the relegation of the Jews to being “companions of the Fire”—meaning that they are destined for Hell—because of their aforementioned alteration of the revelation given them by Allah.<sup>210</sup> Regarding this rejection of the Prophet Muhammad and his message, Jews are criticized for accepting only part of Allah’s revelation, and for this are

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<sup>205</sup> For an example of this phenomenon, compare and contrast the factual details of the life of Joseph (“Yusuf”) between the *Qur'an* (Sura 12) and the *Torah* (Gen. 37, 39-50, JPS).

<sup>206</sup> Sura 2:75a, 79a; 4:46; 5:13-15.

<sup>207</sup> Cook, *The Beginnings of Islam as an Apocalyptic Movement*.

<sup>208</sup> Gorenberg, v-vi.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., vi.

<sup>210</sup> Sura 2:75-81.

consigned “to the most grievous chastisement” on the day of Resurrection.<sup>211</sup> The indictment continues with Jews being referred to as *Kafir* (“one who commits apostasy from religion”) and cursed by Allah for failing to accept Islam.<sup>212</sup> The *Sura* goes on to rebuke Jews for trying to convert those who would follow Islam, claiming that Islam, not Judaism, was the religion followed by Abraham, Isma’il, Isaac and Jacob.<sup>213</sup> Ultimately, *Sura* 2 concludes that Jews failed to interpret Allah’s signs correctly, preferring to reject the authority of Islam.<sup>214</sup> In *Sura* 5, it is recounted how Allah blessed Israel, making a covenant with them if they would follow His messengers and keep His commands; however, they failed to do so, thus Allah “cursed them and hardened their hearts,” again accusing them of altering His words and of being treacherous.<sup>215</sup> *Sura* 19 indicates that though some Jews obeyed Allah (i.e., they embraced Islam), “after them came an evil generation, who wasted prayers and followed lusts, so they will meet perdition.”<sup>216</sup> Finally, *Sura* 98 once again clarifies that Jews who fail to accept the true religion (Islam) “will be in the Fire of hell, abiding therein. They are the worst of creatures.”<sup>217</sup>

The second major theme in the *Qur'an* regarding Jews surrounds the fact that they are not actually God’s chosen people as the *Torah* teaches, but that the Muslims hold this distinction. In *Sura* 3, in what seems to be an invitation to Jews to submit to Islam, readers are enjoined not to reject Allah’s truth as delivered (in the first instance) to Abraham, who (so the *Qur'an* says) was not the father of the Jews, as the *Torah* says, but the first Muslim instead.<sup>218</sup> Of course, there is also the question of which son of Abraham inherited the divine blessing. As has already been mentioned, the Jews reckon that they are God’s people through descent from Abraham through his second son, Isaac. Muslims, however, derive from the *Qur'an* that the divinely favored descent came through Abraham’s *elder* son Isma’il, ancestor of the Prophet and his Arabian

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<sup>211</sup> *Sura* 2:85.

<sup>212</sup> *Sura* 2:87-89.

<sup>213</sup> *Sura* 2:133-137.

<sup>214</sup> *Sura* 2:213.

<sup>215</sup> *Sura* 5:12-13.

<sup>216</sup> *Sura* 19:59

<sup>217</sup> *Sura* 98:6.

<sup>218</sup> *Sura* 3:64-71.

compatriots, not through Isaac.<sup>219</sup> The exclusivity of Judaism as a religion is attacked as well—though Muslims are instructed to forgive Jews for it—the *Qur'an* defies Jews to produce proof (which it assures they cannot do) that theirs is the only way to paradise.<sup>220</sup> *Sura* 45 claims that Israel, though they were granted multiple favors from Allah, ultimately walked away from the right path—the way now followed by Muslims.<sup>221</sup> *Sura* 62 assails Jews who believe that they are Allah's chosen people; it is written that Jews cannot face death with equanimity because they know that they have altered Allah's revelation to them, and thus “that death from which [they] flee...will surely overtake [them].”<sup>222</sup>

A third point of contention with the Jews that is raised in the *Qur'an* surrounds their role in the Islamic version of the apocalypse. Richard Landes posted an interesting article on the CMS website in which he contended that Israel plays a central (antagonistic) role in the narrative of the apocalypse<sup>223</sup> for many Islamic extremists. For example, some Muslim theologians, such as Safar Ibn 'Abd al-Rahman al-Hawali, use biblical (the book of Daniel) and Qur'anic (*Sura* 57) texts as evidence that the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* was a fulfillment of prophecy regarding the *Masih al-Dajjal* (“False Messiah”), whom it was foretold would desecrate the *Haram al-Sharif*.<sup>224</sup> Muslim beliefs about the apocalypse have transformed considerably in the 26 years since the Iranian Revolution, taking on a much more activist form, particularly in relation to the Arab-Israeli struggle, among Palestinian *Sunni* militant groups such as *Hamas* and the PIJ.<sup>225</sup>

Dr. David B. Cook, Landes' associate at the CMS, lends more historical depth to this apocalyptic discussion that requires some explanation. Cook contended that the

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219 *Sura* 15:124-129.

220 *Sura* 2:109-111.

221 *Sura* 45:16-18.

222 *Sura* 62:8.

223 “...the expectation of an imminent cosmic cataclysm in which God destroys the ruling powers of evil and raises the righteous to life in a messianic kingdom” (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary, Encyclopædia Britannica 2004 Ultimate Reference Suite DVD)

224 Landes, *Apocalyptic Islam and Bin Laden*; Safar Ibn 'Abd al-Rahman Al-Hawali, *The Day of Wrath: Is the Intifadha of Rajab Only the Beginning?* [database online]; available from <http://www.islamicbasics.com>; Internet; accessed 16 January 2006.

225 Landes, *Apocalyptic Islam and Bin Laden*.

reluctance of scholars to attribute the explosive growth of early 7<sup>th</sup> century A.D. Islam to the potent religious belief of its adherents hamstrings modern observers of the religion “because contemporary Muslims *themselves* believe that their absolute faith in Allah and the unifying nature of Islam were the most important reasons for their [early] successes.”<sup>226</sup> He added that early Muslims were driven by “the imperative to conquer the world before the expected Hour of Judgment ,” supporting his statement from a *Hadith* where the Prophet is quoted as saying: “Behold! God sent me [the Prophet Muhammad] with a sword, just before the Hour [of Judgment] , and placed my daily sustenance beneath the shadow of my spear, and humiliation and contempt on those who oppose me.”<sup>227</sup> From this, Cook concludes that the expansion of Islam was carried out based upon a scriptural mandate for *Jihad* against any who did not accept the Prophet’s message and embrace Islam. The Islamic colossus that emerged from this first *Jihad* gave the *Dar al-Islam* preeminence over a swath of land and humanity stretching from the gates of Europe to the western marches of China. However, the demise of the political, cultural and economic dominance of the Islamic *Umma*, especially in the last 80 years since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, is seen by Islamic extremists as a trend that must be reversed. The final straw for Muslims in this narrative is that their decline came at the hands of the non-Muslim West, and saw the *Umma* unable to repel the re-establishment of a sovereign Jewish state in lands that had been predominantly under Muslim control since the time of the Prophet. As Cook phrased it:

Obviously God cannot be at fault for this situation—the Muslims themselves must be. The perception is that God is testing the chosen few just before the end of the world. They must prove their faith in God through worldly domination and the reestablishment of the God-ordained Muslim superiority.<sup>228</sup>

Thus from this Islamic extremist interpretation, by allowing the Jewish state of Israel to continue to exist, Muslims are actually failing to pass Allah’s test of their faith.

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<sup>226</sup> David B. Cook, *Islam and Apocalyptic* [database online]; available from <http://www.mille.org/scholarship/papers/cookabs.html>; Internet; accessed 16 January 2006.

<sup>227</sup> Ibid.

<sup>228</sup> Ibid.

The final, and perhaps most pregnant element in the Israeli-Palestinian quarrel for Palestinian Islamic extremists is the status of Jerusalem (*al-Quds*, meaning “holiness” in Arabic), and especially of the *Haram al-Sharif*. Its central monument, the Dome of the Rock, was built by the Muslim Caliph ‘Abd al-Malik Ibn Marwan of Damascus in the year 691 A.D.<sup>229</sup> The scriptural significance of the Dome of the Rock and its immediate surroundings is found in the *Qur'an* in the first verse of *Surat Bani Isra'il* (“The Israelites Chapter”), where it is written that Allah transported the Prophet Muhammad to the *Masjid al-Aqsa* (“The Furthest Mosque”) “whose precincts We blessed.”<sup>230</sup> As Gershom Gorenberg wrote, Islam teaches

that the archangel Gabriel met Muhammad at night in Mecca, and led him to a winged steed named Buraq—lightning—on which he flew to Jerusalem, where he met the prophets who preceded him, including Abraham, Moses and Jesus, and Muhammad led them all in prayer. Muhammad then ascended to heaven, and the rock tried to follow him and the prophet or Gabriel had to hold it back, leaving hand or foot marks on it, and Muhammad was received by God.<sup>231</sup>

Thus, because of the monumental events that transpired there, and because both the mosque and the blessing of Allah upon its environs are recorded in the *Qur'an*, it is absolutely out of the question that the site should ever be surrendered to Jewish control—particularly to be altered or leveled in order to construct the Third Temple for the Jews. In fact, the Islamic *Waqf* trust that administers the *Haram al-Sharif* (with the permission of the Israeli government) published a pamphlet for visitors stating “some believe [the *Haram al-Sharif*] was the site of the Temple of Solomon, peace be upon him...or the site of the Second Temple...although no documented historical or archaeological evidence exists to support this.”<sup>232</sup> Despite the scriptural significance of the shrine to Muslims and the fact that Israel continues to allow the Islamic *Waqf* to manage the site and restrict Jewish activities there, “in the eyes of Muslims, Islam is embattled [there], not

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<sup>229</sup> Gorenberg, 71.

<sup>230</sup> Sura 17:1.

<sup>231</sup> Gorenberg, 70.

<sup>232</sup> Ibid.

triumphant, and its hold on the *Haram* is threatened by the Jewish messianic vision. Anxious about the future, Muslims seek to erase the Temple from the site's past.”<sup>233</sup>

These four themes from the Islamic scriptures—that Jews are apostates from the true religion of Islam, that they are inferior to Muslims in the eyes of Allah, that they are the principal barrier in the way of apocalyptic redemption for Muslims and that they are usurpers of one of Islam’s holiest shrines—combine to form a potentially intoxicating cocktail for Islamic extremists, particularly in Palestine. These teachings have been espoused by recognized Islamic religious authorities and then applied in waking life to the extremists’ approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

## 2. Extremist Leaders

### a. *Hasan al-Banna*

Born in Egypt in 1906 to an Islamic teacher, Hasan al-Banna received only the most elementary Islamic education. Though he studied in secular schools to become a teacher in Egypt’s national school system, he undertook on his own to deepen his understanding of Islam. Through the course of his personal studies and the experiences of his early teaching career, he became convinced that “the West was engaged in a new crusade to destroy Islam by means of social corruption and unbelief.”<sup>234</sup> As al-Banna observed, this blatantly obvious crusade in 1920s Egypt (under British authority at the time) “founded schools and scientific and cultural institutes in the very heart of the Islamic domain, which cast doubt and heresy into the souls of its sons and taught them how to...disparage their religion...[and] divest themselves of their traditions and beliefs.”<sup>235</sup>

Al-Banna came to the point, frustrated with the benign impotence of the extant Islamic organizations to counter this crusade in Egypt, where he founded the Muslim Brotherhood to begin setting things right. The activities of the MB were proactive and all-encompassing—bringing politics, social programs, education and business under the umbrella of Islam. The MB also dictated the practice of Islam for its

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<sup>233</sup> Gorenberg, 72.

<sup>234</sup> John O. Voll, “Fundamentalism in the Sunni Arab World: Egypt and the Sudan.” *Fundamentalisms Observed*, Vol. 1, eds. Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 360.

<sup>235</sup> Ibid., 361.

followers, emphasizing prayer, meditation and daily readings of the *Qur'an* as mandatory daily rituals. Under the leadership of the layman al-Banna, MB leadership was likewise the domain of the laity versus the traditional Islamic scholars.<sup>236</sup>

Hasan al-Banna is the first personality quoted in the opening of the *Hamas* charter immediately following an introductory passage from the *Qur'an*. He is quoted as saying: “Israel will be established and will stay established until Islam nullifies it as it nullified what was before it.”<sup>237</sup> One key element of al-Banna’s MB doctrine that is employed by groups like *Hamas* against Israel states that “if you rise against us or stand in the path of our message, then we are permitted by God to defend ourselves against your injustice.”<sup>238</sup> Al-Banna’s vision for Islamic society went beyond that of Islamic modernists like Jamal al-Din al-Afghani or Muhammad ‘Abduh; the MB founder argued that the brotherhood of Islam “should unite to strengthen the Islamic world and to re-establish the principles and the practices of Islam in its purest form...against ‘the encroachments of materialism.’”<sup>239</sup> Al-Banna himself was not a particular advocate of militancy and violence, preferring instead an emphasis on a more benign program of information and missionary work.<sup>240</sup> He was even referred to (and emulated) as a “pragmatist” for his willingness to enter the non-Islamic political forum on an Islamic platform.<sup>241</sup> Nevertheless, al-Banna was also prepared to enter the fray of violence; the MB under his leadership developed “its own armed force.”<sup>242</sup> Al-Banna was murdered in 1949, likely to avenge the murder of the Egyptian prime minister the previous year by a member of the MB.<sup>243</sup>

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<sup>236</sup> Voll, 361-362.

<sup>237</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, *The Palestinian Hamas: Vision, Violence, and Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 175.

<sup>238</sup> Hourani, 348.

<sup>239</sup> Harris, 161.

<sup>240</sup> Mishal & Sela, 29.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 115.

<sup>242</sup> Martin Kramer, “Fundamentalist Islam at Large: The Drive for Power,” *Middle East Quarterly* (June 1996): 39.

<sup>243</sup> Voll, 363.

**b. Sayyid Qutb**

This Egyptian sage of the MB is a hero to Islamic extremists for withstanding the harshest years of repression from the Egyptian state.<sup>244</sup> He came to the fore in Egypt after the murder of al-Banna and during the wave of purges against Islamic extremists implemented by Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s. Although he was initially a follower of secular nationalism in Egypt, he experienced a change of heart “that of an Islamic *da’iyah* (missionary or summoner).”<sup>245</sup> Part of Qutb’s journey toward extremist Islam was the result of a two-year educational stint in the United States, where he was dismayed by how the country was “materialistic and lacking in spiritual values and was disturbed by the popular and media support...for the nascent state of Israel.”<sup>246</sup>

Sayyid Qutb was deeply committed, to the point of defending it with violence, to the sovereignty of Allah over all other authorities, and he maligned all, including his fellow Muslims, whose allegiance was to anyone or anything else.<sup>247</sup> Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela wrote of him that: “violent Islam has been identified primarily with Sayyid Qutb’s militant doctrine, which viewed non-Islamic rule as *Jahiliyya* (the pre-Islamic era, portrayed by Muslims as a period of ignorance and darkness).”<sup>248</sup> John Voll developed this idea further, quoting Qutb’s writings: “*jahiliyya*...takes the form of claiming the right to create values, to legislate rules of collective behavior, and to choose any way of life that rests with men, without regard to what God has prescribed.”<sup>249</sup> In this way, Qutb’s position on *Jahiliyya* was similar to that of Maulana Mawdudi, although Qutb believed in tackling it with violence.<sup>250</sup> Needless to say, his teachings continued to create problems for the Egyptian government well after his death.<sup>251</sup>

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<sup>244</sup> Mishal & Sela, 29.

<sup>245</sup> Voll, 369.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Ibid., 371.

<sup>248</sup> Mishal & Sela, 29.

<sup>249</sup> Ibid.

<sup>250</sup> Ibid., 372.

<sup>251</sup> One example of Qutb’s influential teachings was the rise of *Al-Takfir wal-Hijra* under Shukri Mustafa in Egypt. The group was brutally suppressed by the Sadat regime. See Gilles Kepel, *Jihad: The Trail of Political Islam* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002), 83-85.

With respect to the question of the Jews (and thereby of Israel), Qutb went to the ancient source on the subject, the *Qur'an*. He reified the scriptural arguments against them from the time of the Prophet—since “the only divine truth left to mankind was Islam, all the others, including Judaism...were repositories of distortion and falsehood, not reflections of divine revelations.”<sup>252</sup> Qutb taught that the Jews were out to destroy Islam and divert Muslims from the true path, and “transmitted a message of eternal enmity between Jews and Islam... [It was] a war that ‘[had] not been extinguished...its blaze [continued] raging in all corners of the world.’”<sup>253</sup> In his parlance, the Jews had been up to the same intrigues against Islam since its inception, this was endemic to their nature, and Palestinian Muslims could only defeat them (and Israel) under the banner of a purified Islam.<sup>254</sup> Like al-Banna before him, Qutb believed that the West was out “to conquer and destroy Islam,” and chief among his proofs behind this theory was British and American “promoting [of] Jewish emigration to Palestine.”<sup>255</sup>

*c. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin*

Sheikh Yassin, who started *Hamas* as an offshoot of the Palestinian MB, was a religious scholar and teacher in the Gaza Strip.<sup>256</sup> He was the leader of the MB who helped author a key document in December 1987 “that call for the intensification of [the First *Intifada*]”<sup>257</sup> The Israelis finally arrested Sheikh Yassin in September 1989 as part of a crackdown on Islamic militants in the OT—a cadre of people that, using the chain of mosques and religious institutions which the Israelis had previously supported, was growing into a major threat to Israel.<sup>258</sup> The sheikh, who was nearly blind and severely disabled owing to an accident in his youth, was incarcerated until 1997, freed only as a bargaining chip to secure the release of two Mossad agents arrested in Jordan for an assassination attempt on Khaled Meshaal, at the time a minor member of the *Hamas* leadership. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim credits Yassin’s release by the Israeli

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<sup>252</sup> Israeli, 102.

<sup>253</sup> Ibid.

<sup>254</sup> Ibid., 103.

<sup>255</sup> Voll, 369.

<sup>256</sup> Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall: Israel and the Arab World* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001), 459.

<sup>257</sup> Kepel, 153.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 156.

government of Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu as a critical factor in raising *Hamas'* stocks in the late 1990s, making it next to impossible for the Palestinian Authority (PA) to clamp down on their violent activities.<sup>259</sup>

Yassin's original claim to fame was the fact that he was arrested in Nasser's 1965 crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt (which was also operating in the Gaza Strip at the time)—a purge that included the martyrdom of one of the brotherhood's effluent voices, Sayyid Qutb.<sup>260</sup> Sheikh Yassin was assassinated on March 22, 2004, by an Israeli air strike as he departed from early morning prayers at a Gaza City mosque, an act that elicited rage and massive demonstrations among Palestinians.<sup>261</sup>

*d. Fathi al-Shiqaqi*

Al-Shiqaqi, a doctor, and his contemporaries came from an anti-regime faction in Egypt known as the “Islamic Liberation Party,”<sup>262</sup> and was “the military leader of Islamic Jihad.”<sup>263</sup> Al-Shiqaqi and his associate, ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-‘Auda, were proponents of an ecumenical movement calling all sects of Islam—Sunni, Shi'a, et cetera—to unite in *Jihad* against Israel. The doctor was a leader among Palestinian students at the University of Zagazig in Egypt. He was the published author of a short work espousing a Palestinian uprising after the fashion of the Islamic Revolution in Iran under Ayatollah Khomeini. According to Gilles Kepel, al-Shiqaqi saw the Iranian example as an indication of the potential of *Jihad* to overcome the “the [Muslim] Brothers’ ‘quiescence’ and the PLO’s ‘impiety.’”<sup>264</sup> Al-Shiqaqi was among the first of those in the Muslim Brotherhood tradition to advocate abandoning a peaceful, defensive stance in favor of open, armed conflict with the Israelis. Their detractors in the

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<sup>259</sup> Shlaim, 459, 587.

<sup>260</sup> Mishal and Sela, 17.

<sup>261</sup> “Hamas Chief Killed in Air Strike,” *BBC News, International Version*, March 22, 2004 [online news]; available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/3556099.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3556099.stm); Internet; accessed 5 March 2006.

<sup>262</sup> Mishal and Sela, 32.

<sup>263</sup> Ahmad S. Moussalli, *Historical Dictionary of Islamic Fundamentalist Movements in the Arab World, Iran, and Turkey* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1999), 158.

<sup>264</sup> Kepel, 122.

Palestinian Islamic community felt that actions of this nature were premature if they came before an Islamic state had actually been declared in Palestine.<sup>265</sup>

Al-Shiqaqi was assassinated by the Israelis on the island of Malta on October 26, 1995, allegedly for his involvement in supporting suicide bombings in Israel.<sup>266</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

Palestinian Islamic extremists have a formidable arsenal of religious diktat supporting them in their opposition to the state of Israel, and to Jews in general. According to the *Qur'an*, Jews are the enemies of Islam, having abrogated the revelations of Allah, rejected his Prophet and threatened the Islamic faith and its holiest places. These scriptural teachings have not gone unnoticed by the religious extremist leaders looking for fodder to mobilize Palestinians against Israel. Religious convictions first espoused by the MB in Egypt, evoked by Islamic extremist luminaries like Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb were easily adopted and applied to present circumstances by the early leaders of Palestinian Islamic extremism such as Sheikh Yassin and Fathi al-Shiqaqi. These men, as will be seen next, founded groups that took the doctrines to a new level in perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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<sup>265</sup> Mishal and Sela, 32-33.

<sup>266</sup> Ibid., 75.

## **V. ISLAMIC EXTREMIST GROUPS: FOUNDATIONS, GROUP PROFILES & ACTIVITIES SINCE OSLO I**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The strong personalities mentioned in the previous section helped to put flesh on the anti-Jewish sentiments contained in the Islamic scriptures, effectively marrying them to the intolerant position in which the Palestinians found themselves with respect to the state of Israel. These men were provided a mixture of historical examples and real-world leadership for the Islamic extremist organizations that emerged in the Occupied Territories during the 1980s, and waxed in the violence of their operations against Israelis throughout the 1990s and well into the first decade of the new century. However, these groups did not only attack the Israelis, they also functioned as a religious counter-weight to the morally discredited and inept Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), the group that came to politically dominate the Palestinian Authority (PA) from the early 1990s up until the 2006 elections. In describing these Islamic extremist groups rose in opposition to the PLO, Raphael Israeli wrote that while the PLO co-opted Islam for self-serving purposes, the extremists lent “primacy to Islam over nationalistic and other considerations...[and were] more prepared than others to take risks in the fulfillment of those lofty goals.”<sup>267</sup>

Using the banner of Islam as a standard for the Palestinian struggle with the state of Israel, these Islamic extremist groups, *Hamas* in particular, have taken the level of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to astronomical levels, especially since the start of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada* in 2000. The collection actions of these groups have gone a long way in raising insurmountable barriers to peace, preoccupying the Israeli government with a virtual state of war and committing act after act of violence that could only reinforce the justice of the causes of GE and Kach in the minds of their adherents.

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<sup>267</sup> Israeli, 20.

## **B. HARIKET UL-MUQAWWAMAT UL-ISLAMIYYA (ISLAMIC RESISTANCE MOVEMENT – HAMAS)**

Propaganda attributed to *Hamas* started hitting the streets at the end of 1987, but it did not assume its name and formally declare itself until January 1988.<sup>268</sup> Though *Hamas* is known today for the violent actions of its most militant wing, the ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam Brigades, it began as a relatively above-board offshoot of the aforementioned Palestinian arm of the MB.<sup>269</sup>

As the Israelis supported the MB in earlier days, they also gave *Hamas* leeway in the 1980s because of its opposition to the secular PLO<sup>270</sup>—it was a classic situation of “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.” Of course, in order to acquire legal sanction from the Israeli government to operate, *Hamas* was “obliged to pledge that its fight for Palestinian rights would be conducted within the limits of the law and without the use of arms.”<sup>271</sup> *Hamas* also benefited from the presence of its elder, the PIJ, which acted as a lightning rod for Israeli reprisals during the First *Intifada* of the late 1980s. Historian Charles Smith explained that because of this, *Hamas* was essentially able to sneak in under the radar and establish itself as the modern expression of MB ideals.

As mentioned previously, one of the earliest *Hamas* notables from the MB cadre was Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, whose leadership of *Hamas* led to his assassination by the Israelis in 2004. In the ilk of its forebear, the MB, *Hamas* and its founders wished to “[create] a Palestinian state, founded on religious principles, in all of former Palestine.”<sup>272</sup> In light of principle aims like this, it may be difficult to conceive that the Israelis wanted to support (even under the table) a Palestinian movement of this kind. Of course, since both PIJ and *Hamas* were nascent organizations in the 1980s, the Israelis

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<sup>268</sup> 268 *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, Vol 2, eds. Martha Crenshaw and John Pimlott (Armonk, NY: Sharpe Reference, 1997), 348.

<sup>269</sup> 269 U.S. Department of State, *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, April 2004), 120.

<sup>270</sup> 270 Glenn E. Robinson, “The Logic of Palestinian State-Building after Oslo,” in *Building a Palestinian State: The Incomplete Revolution* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1997), 189; Shlaim, *The Iron Wall*, 459.

<sup>271</sup> 271 Shlaim, 459.

<sup>272</sup> 272 Charles D. Smith, *Palestine and the Arab-Israeli Conflict*, 5<sup>th</sup> ed. (New York: St. Martin's, 2004), 410.

felt they would benefit by encouraging the Palestinians to splinter along as many lines as possible, thereby postponing confrontation with a unified Palestinian entity.

The MB branch that formed the basis for *Hamas* began at the Islamic University of Gaza, and according to Ahmad Moussalli, “continuously clashed with the secular forces of the [PLO].”<sup>273</sup> Moussalli went on to explain that the MB, until the outbreak of the First *Intifada* in 1987, had only sought socio-economic improvements in the OT, and had distanced itself from politics. However, he postulated that the *Intifada* was the magnet that drew the MB into the arena of armed conflict with Israel that they had previously avoided. *Hamas* was not simply a militant organization. It first won the support of the Palestinian populace through its socio-economic schemes. These schemes, which originated in the Gaza Strip under the MB auspices, included funneling *Zakat* (Islamic charity or alms-giving) to the poor of that region. This won the forbears of *Hamas* a great deal of clout and influence.<sup>274</sup> As a result, *Hamas*’ move into the militant realm at a time of popular uprising only brought the organization further acclaim with its people.<sup>275</sup>

Unlike the PLO, *Hamas* was (and is) opposed to any kind of settlement with the Israelis. In addition to being embedded in Palestinian society, opposition to Israel was one of the organization’s key calling cards, and raises difficulties to the present day for any involvement by the group in peace negotiations.<sup>276</sup> A virtual clone of its elder brother movement, the PIJ, *Hamas*’ position at its core was that “the state of Israel should not exist.”<sup>277</sup> What this meant for *Hamas* from the beginning was that all the land of Palestine prior to the declaration of the state of Israel should constitute a Palestinian Arab Islamic state. As expressed in the *Hamas* charter, “Palestine is an Islamic land, ‘an Islamic waqf throughout the generations until the Day of Resurrection.’”<sup>278</sup> This of

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<sup>273</sup> Moussalli, 76.

<sup>274</sup> Mishal and Sela, 19-20.

<sup>275</sup> Moussalli, 77.

<sup>276</sup> Mishal and Sela, 2.

<sup>277</sup> Jonathan Randall White, *Terrorism: An Introduction*, 3rd ed. (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Thomson Learning, 2001), 159.

<sup>278</sup> Mark A. Tessler, *A History of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 695.

course places *Hamas* on the opposite pole from the Zionists (religious and secular) who sought the entirety of Biblical Israel, or *Eretz Israel*, for a solely Jewish state. It also put *Hamas* at loggerheads with the reality on the ground, as well as with Fatah, which declared, as part of the Oslo peace process, that it was prepared to accept less than all of Palestine. For Fatah to countenance such an idea was akin to blasphemy.<sup>279</sup> A brief look at Article 27 of the *Hamas* Charter (written in 1988) shows that the organization tried to hold out a hand to the PLO, recalling the brotherly affinity of all Muslims, but in the end made this statement contingent upon the PLO embracing Islam as the foundation for a Palestinian state.<sup>280</sup> So, *Hamas*' religiously-based ideology places it in the very tedious position between “adherence to the Islamic vision of holy war (*Jihad*) against Israel...and its awareness of the necessity of reckoning with political considerations.”<sup>281</sup>

Another defining aspect of *Hamas* was the way in which it *diverged* from its MB roots. As has already been stated, *Hamas* was first and foremost a departure from the MB's predominantly peaceable efforts. However, as Mark Tessler puts it, within the Palestinian community itself, it distinguished itself by not pandering to the traditional and established elites—a common MB modus operandi—rather, it “sought recruits among the younger and better-educated individuals without ties to the Palestinian establishment.”<sup>282</sup>

The U.S. State Department's *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003* lists the worldwide Palestinian community as the principle financial backer of *Hamas*.<sup>283</sup> However, in its infancy, the movement was financed by Saudi Arabia and other oil-producing states of the region, including Iran.<sup>284</sup> So, like any powerful organization, *Hamas* is well-bankrolled.

Replete with the backing of the Palestinian milieu by right of its social services and the moral authority of Islam, and financed by the deep pockets of the Gulf States,

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<sup>279</sup> White, 159-60.

<sup>280</sup> Bernard Reich, *Arab-Israeli Conflict and Conciliation: A Documentary History* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995), 209.

<sup>281</sup> Mishal and Sela, 13.

<sup>282</sup> Tessler, 695.

<sup>283</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, 120.

<sup>284</sup> Tessler, 695; *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, 120.

*Hamas* could boldly issue leaflets in January of 1988 with Qur’anic recitations such as the one reproduced by Charles Smith, which read (in part):

The infidels ‘will not cease from fighting against you till they have made you renegades from religion, if they can. And whoso becometh a renegade and dieth in his disbelief such are they whose works have fallen both in the world and in the Hereafter. Such are the rightful owners of the fire: they will abide therein.’<sup>285</sup>

Armed in this way, they are a potent force, not only among the Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories and many in Diaspora, but also in the wider Islamic world.

Raphael Israeli indicated that when the *Hamas* charter was written in 1988, it “[seemed] to articulate a growing sentiment that Islam [was] the panacea for all the ills of Palestine.”<sup>286</sup> The charter contains a myriad of Islamic scriptural references to back up the group’s various claims.<sup>287</sup> The opening statement of the charter is taken from Sura 3 of the *Qur'an*—a passage comparing Jews as *Ahl al-Kitab* (“People of the Book”—a category that encompasses Christians as well) with Muslims. This scripture elevates Muslims as “the best nation that hath been raised up,” and vilifies Jews as “smitten with vileness wheresoever they are found,” and subjected to “indignation from Allah” because they fail to accept Islam.<sup>288</sup>

In the introduction to the charter, *Hamas* calls upon the Palestinian people to be prepared for a “very long and dangerous” battle with the Jews requiring “the dedication of all of us...[through] successive phases, a battalion that must be supported by battalion after battalion of the divided Arab and Islamic world until the enemy is vanquished and the victory of Allah is sure.”<sup>289</sup>

*Hamas* defines itself in its charter as a movement based upon Islam, and governed by it in all aspects of ideology and practice. It claims historical connection to the “Righteous Ancestors,” (*al-Salaf al-Salih*) living thus with “Allah as its goal, the Prophet

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<sup>285</sup> Smith, 433.

<sup>286</sup> Israeli, 21.

<sup>287</sup> For a further discussion of these, also see Israeli, 104.

<sup>288</sup> Mishal & Sela, 175; Sura 3:110-112.

<sup>289</sup> Mishal & Sela, 176.

as its model, and the *Qur'an* is its constitution.”<sup>290</sup> In such lofty pursuits, “death for the sake of Allah is [the movement’s] most coveted desire.”<sup>291</sup>

Hamas’ charter contains the same *Hadith* quoted by ‘Usama bin Laden in his 1998 television interview. *Hamas* uses this *Hadith* to encourage the Faithful not to flag in their efforts until the final goal is attained in “The Last Hour.”<sup>292</sup> In *Hamas* parlance, the *Jihad* of Palestinian nationalism against “the enemy...when he sets foot on the land of the Muslims” is considered a religious obligation levied upon “every Muslim man and woman.”<sup>293</sup> In light of this, the *Hamas* charter categorically rejects “[peace] initiatives, the so-called peaceful solutions, and international conferences” undertaken on behalf of the Palestinians.<sup>294</sup> These same are seen merely as “a means of enforcing the rule of unbelievers [non-Muslims] in the land of the Muslims.”<sup>295</sup> As evidence of this, the charter recalls the passage in Sura 2 of the *Qur'an* which advises Muslims that “the Jews will never be pleased with thee...until thou follow their religion,” and warns them that they stand in peril of Allah’s wrath if they do so.<sup>296</sup>

With respect to the sanctity of the land, the historical paraphrase of *Hamas* confirms that the desire of the enemies of Islam was to discredit Islam as a religion before consummating the goal of the Crusades through the physical occupation of Palestine. According to *Hamas*, Palestine is holy to Muslims because Jerusalem is its center, the original city which Muslims were to face during their five daily prayers, and because Jerusalem contains *Al-Aqsa* Mosque, forever sanctified because of the Prophet’s visit there. The charter also quotes a *Hadith* of Muhammad to the effect that one day “Allah is going to conquer Syria for you...from al-‘Arish to the Euphrates,” territory that would include Palestine.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>290</sup> Mishal & Sela, 178.

<sup>291</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>292</sup> Ibid.

<sup>293</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid., 183.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

<sup>296</sup> Mishal & Sela, 183; Sura 2:120.

<sup>297</sup> Mishal & Sela, 198.

The charter beckons to the Arab and Islamic peoples to join *Hamas'* war against Zionism, warning that the Jews' ultimate goal is subjugation of lands even beyond those between the Nile and the Euphrates Rivers. It goes on at some length about the global conspiracy of Zionists to isolate the Palestinians from the rest of their Arab and Islamic neighbors. *Hamas* enjoins these neighbors against committing such a "high treason" and incurring a "curse" upon themselves on the authority of Sura 8, which warns that the one who abandons the Faithful in the midst of the fight will suffer "the indignation of Allah, and his abode shall be hell."<sup>298</sup> *Hamas* sees itself as one with its fellow anti-Zionist Islamic movements and as partners, to a limited extent, with non-Islamic Palestinian nationalist movements such as the PLO. The PLO, while serving a worthy purpose, will only truly be one with *Hamas* when it "has adopted Islam as its system of life."<sup>299</sup>

*Hamas* put its religious doctrines into violent action 533 times against Israelis between September 13, 1993 and December 31, 2005, and has thus been far and away the most active and violent of the Palestinian Islamic extremist groups over the period.<sup>300</sup> The group drew the first blood of the post-Oslo I era in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, stabbing an Israeli farmer to death near Tel Aviv 11 days after the peace agreement was signed.<sup>301</sup> Since that time, *Hamas* has been the progenitor of more religiously motivated acts of violence in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than any other religious extremist group. There are really two consecutive epochs of violence in the 12-year period since Oslo I—the pre-*Al-Aqsa Intifada* period (September 13, 1993 – September 28, 2000), and the post-*Al-Aqsa* era (September 29, 2000 to the present)—in both eras, *Hamas* has played the principal role. *Hamas* was responsible for 31 acts of violence in the pre-*Al-Aqsa* period compared with a total of 13 incidents attributed to all other religious Zionist

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298 Mishal & Sela, 196; Sura 8:16.

299 Mishal & Sela, 193.

300 MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Incident Analysis Wizard," [database on-line] Search string: Hamas, Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Sep. 13, 1993-Dec. 31, 2005; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

301 MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, "Incident Profile: Hamas Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Sept. 24, 1993, Israel)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=7177>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

and Palestinian Islamic groups combined during the same time-frame.<sup>302</sup> It is worth mentioning that even in 1999, a year otherwise entirely devoid of violence claimed by or ascribed to religious extremists, *Hamas* was the sole group to raise its head, attempting to assassinate two Israeli settlers driving home to their home in a small Jewish settlement in an otherwise Palestinian neighborhood in Hebron.<sup>303</sup> The post *Al-Aqsa* era saw *Hamas* raise their operations tempo to unseen levels. Beginning with 20 reported operations in 2001,<sup>304</sup> *Hamas* accelerated their involvement in violence exponentially over the next two years. By 2004, the annual number of violent *Hamas* incidents reached triple digits; 206 operations were carried out that year.<sup>305</sup> Even in 2005, where the group participated in the *hudna* (“truce”) during the run-up to the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, *Hamas* was still responsible for 183 incidents over the first 10 months of the year.<sup>306</sup> It is difficult to say how the organization will choose to express its religiously-motivated opposition to the Jewish state now that it has won an overwhelming popular mandate—74 out of 132 parliamentary seats with 75% of over 1.3 million registered voters participating—to form the next government for the Palestinians.<sup>307</sup> Though at least a portion of the group has entered the formal political process, up to the present, *Hamas* political leadership has insisted it retains the right to violent resistance while, as one of its spokesmen phrased it, Israeli “occupation and aggression continues.”<sup>308</sup>

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<sup>302</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: *Hamas*, Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Sep. 13, 1993-Sep. 28, 1994; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>303</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Profile: *Hamas* Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Aug. 3, 1999, Israel),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=16667>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>304</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: *Hamas*, Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2001; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

<sup>305</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: *Hamas*, Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2004; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

<sup>306</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: *Hamas*, Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2005; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

<sup>307</sup> “*Hamas Takes Power Vowing No Talks*,” *BBC News, International Version*, February 18, 2006 [online news]; available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4726494.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4726494.stm); Internet; accessed 7 March 2006.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*

### **1. ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam Brigades**

This sub-group of *Hamas* is named after the venerated martyr of the same name from 1930s Palestinian Islamic militant history. It is generally known as *Hamas*’ militant wing, having operated under the political top-cover of the larger group since at least the mid-1990s.<sup>309</sup> They “have conducted many attacks—including large-scale suicide bombings—against Israeli civilian and military targets.”<sup>310</sup>

The group’s first recorded act of violence, which occurred on August 27, 1994, was the stabbing to death of two Israelis in the village of Ramle commemorating the six month anniversary and avenging the massacre of Muslim worshippers at the Ibrahimi Mosque in Hebron at the hands of Baruch Goldstein, a religious Zionist extremist.<sup>311</sup> Since that time, the ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam Brigades have participated in 94 of *Hamas*’ aforementioned 533 violent operations. Only six of these were recorded prior to the outbreak of the *Al-Aqsa Intifada*, with the remaining 88 occurring during from 2001 on: 8 in 2001; 28 in 2002; 40 in 2003; and 12 in 2004. ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam was quiet in 2005.<sup>312</sup>

### **C. HARIKET AL-JIHAD AL-ISLAMI FI FILASTIN (PALESTINIAN ISLAMIC JIHAD – PIJ)**

According to the Encyclopedia of Terrorism, the PIJ (not to be confused with the Egyptian Islamic Jihad which assassinated Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat in 1981)<sup>313</sup> was started in the Gaza Strip at the end of the 1970s by Fathi al-Shiqaqi and ‘Abd al-‘Aziz al-‘Auda. The PIJ was an entirely secret organization until the mid-1980s “whose members were said to include men recruited while in Israeli prisons.”<sup>314</sup> Before

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<sup>309</sup> Mishal & Sela, 74.

<sup>310</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, 120.

<sup>311</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incident Profile: Hamas Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Aug. 27, 1994, Israel),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=7533>; Internet; accessed 1 March 2006.

<sup>312</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, “Incidents: Search for: al-Qassem OR al-Qassam AND NOT rocket,” [database on-line]; available from [http://www.tkb.org/RWExecQuery.jsp?SDOC=76&sLibraryType=Terr\\_Incidents&QueryString=al-Qassem%20OR%20al-Qassam%20AND%20NOT%20rocket](http://www.tkb.org/RWExecQuery.jsp?SDOC=76&sLibraryType=Terr_Incidents&QueryString=al-Qassem%20OR%20al-Qassam%20AND%20NOT%20rocket); Internet; accessed 1 March 2006.

<sup>313</sup> John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terror in the Name of Islam* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 90.

<sup>314</sup> Tessler, 693.

the early days of the First *Intifada* in 1987-88, the PIJ was considered to be composed in very small cells whose numbers in sum were negligible.<sup>315</sup>

Like *Hamas*, this Muslim Brotherhood-founded organization took inspiration from ‘Izz el-Din al-Qassam, the first widely acknowledged Islamic martyr of armed conflict with the state of Israel.<sup>316</sup> However, unlike *Hamas*, the PIJ was not an organization that enjoyed a broad base of grass-roots support among garden-variety Palestinians. In fact, absent *Hamas*’ network of social services, it was and remains difficult to pin down exactly who or what comprises the PIJ.<sup>317</sup> Whatever the case, the PIJ was a pioneer of Islamic extremism in the Palestinian community. They were the first to effectively exploit Islam as a means of whipping-up the populous, and drew praise even from secular elements in Palestinian society for their efforts and successes in this.<sup>318</sup>

The PIJ, in its early days maintained a working relationship with Yasser ‘Arafat and Fatah, the political faction of the PLO, even cooperating with the Unified National Leadership (UNL) of Palestine—a PLO-endorsed institution—at the beginning of the First *Intifada*. This initial working relationship fizzled, however, when PIJ learned that ‘Arafat had plans to cave-in to the Israelis and the West and approve a two-state solution for the Arab-Israeli conflict. Of course, a critical point to recall about the PLO is that Israel’s forcible ejection of the group from Lebanon in 1982 had rendered it militarily and politically bankrupt.<sup>319</sup> The PIJ, by contrast, had made a name for itself by being the first to lock horns with the Israelis before the First *Intifada*, and then by continuing this practice after the *Intifada* had begun.<sup>320</sup>

There is also a bit of rivalry between the PIJ and *Hamas*. The PIJ regards itself as the Islamic organization that had spearheaded armed confrontation with the Israelis, while *Hamas* is seen as a relative newcomer to that struggle.<sup>321</sup> This rivalry, however,

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<sup>315</sup> Tessler, 693.

<sup>316</sup> Smith, 410.

<sup>317</sup> *Encyclopedia of World Terrorism*, 349.

<sup>318</sup> Tessler, 693-4.

<sup>319</sup> Mishal and Sela, 34.

<sup>320</sup> Smith, 410.

<sup>321</sup> Mishal and Sela, 57.

does not approach the divide separating both religious groups from the secular PLO. John L. Esposito listed the PIJ as an organization not only opposed to *political* Zionism, but also as one that viewed “the Palestinian-Israeli conflict as the most recent iteration of an age-old struggle between Islam and Judaism, dating back to the Jews’ rejection of [the Prophet] Muhammad.”<sup>322</sup> The PIJ drew strength from the example of the Iranian Revolution of 1979 in its crusade to eliminate “all Western influence from the entire Muslim world.”<sup>323</sup>

The earliest attribution of violence against Israelis by members of the PIJ came in October of 1987 in the Gaza Strip, when it killed an Israeli officer and four Palestinians; an event that sparked riots at the university there.<sup>324</sup> Strangely, this level of acrimony was not necessarily reciprocated by the Israelis until the very end of the 1980s. Israel did not formally denounce the PIJ as a terrorist organization until mid-1989, and waited another entire year before mounting aggressive operations to round up PIJ militants in the Occupied Territories.<sup>325</sup>

In the present day, though the organization still exists and carries out operations in Israel and the Occupied Territories, the U.S. State Department’s *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003* listed the strength of the PIJ as “unknown.”<sup>326</sup> The organization is known to receive money from the Iranians, and until recently, had offices in Syria<sup>327</sup>—offices that Syria has claimed in the press are now closed.

The PIJ, unlike its counterpart *Hamas*, is an organization with secretive origins and a lack of deep roots in modern-day Palestinian society. It is less integrated into ordinary Palestinian life than *Hamas*, and lacks Fatah’s political ties (however weak those may be) with the West and the Israeli government. It’s sole commitment is to the “violent destruction of Israel...[as part of] a larger worldwide holy war, pitting Islam against all non-believers. PIJ has thus violently opposed the peace process and has

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<sup>322</sup> Esposito, 97.

<sup>323</sup> Fereydoun Hoveyda. *The Broken Crescent: The "Threat" of Militant Islamic Fundamentalism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998), 98.

<sup>324</sup> Tessler, 680.

<sup>325</sup> Mishal and Sela, 56.

<sup>326</sup> *Patterns of Global Terrorism 2003*, 130.

<sup>327</sup> Ibid.

actively used suicide bombings against Israeli targets to derail the process.”<sup>328</sup> This unrelenting opposition to the existence of Israel has kept the PIJ out of the Palestinian electoral process and the *hudna* which has accompanied it. For the PIJ, any association with Israel with respect to politics or peace is polluted and thus unacceptable.<sup>329</sup>

Within this campaign of violent opposition, the first operation undertaken by the PIJ after the September signing of the Oslo I accord did not take place until December 5<sup>th</sup>, and was the sole act of violence claimed by the group during the final three-and-a-half months of 1993. The shooting on an Israeli public bus resulted in the death of two Israelis as well as the PIJ operative.<sup>330</sup> Throughout the remainder of the 1990s, the PIJ were relatively quiet, the bulk (103) of their 109 total operations against Israelis since September 13, 1993 transpiring since Ariel Sharon’s September 2000 visit to the *Haram al-Sharif*.<sup>331</sup> 2005 was the PIJ’s most active year to-date. It was responsible for 54 incidents in the period.<sup>332</sup>

The PIJ refused to join the *hudna* preceding the 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, remaining dedicated to the annihilation of the state of Israel and carrying on with operations to that end up to the present.<sup>333</sup> The PIJ committed five acts of violence in Israel in January, 2006, continuing the pursuit of its Islamic extremist agenda against the state of Israel despite the decisive political majority attained by its brother organization, *Hamas*, in parliamentary elections a few weeks earlier.<sup>334</sup>

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<sup>328</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Group Profile: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=82>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

<sup>329</sup> Ibid.

<sup>330</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Profile: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) Attacked Transportation Target (Dec. 5, 1993, Israel),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=7222>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>331</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Sep. 13, 1993-Dec. 31, 2005; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 2 March 2006.

<sup>332</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Jan. 1-Dec. 31, 2005; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

<sup>333</sup> “Islamic Jihad Claims W Bank Blast,” BBC News, International Version, December 30, 2005 [online news]; available from [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/4569004.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4569004.stm); Internet; accessed 7 March 2006.

<sup>334</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Analysis Wizard,” [database on-line] Search string: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), Middle East, Israel, West Bank/Gaza, Jan. 1-31, 2006; available from <http://www.tkb.org/ChartModule.jsp>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

### **1. Saraya al-Quds (Jerusalem Squads or Brigades)**

Though it maintains separate *titular* political and armed divisions, PIJ does not differentiate *practically* between itself and its militant wing, *Saraya al-Quds*. The first act of violence attributed to *Saraya al-Quds*, pulled off in 2002 in cooperation with its parent organization, was also the *only* operation in which the TKB differentiated the Jerusalem Squads from the PIJ. The operation was a suicide bombing at the Arim open air market in the city of Kfar Sava which led to the deaths of three people (including the bomber) and the injury of 69 others.<sup>335</sup> With the exception of this sole incident, operations of the Jerusalem Squads have been referred to under the auspices of the PIJ.

### **D. LIJAN AL-MUQAWWAMAT ASH-SHA'ABIYYA (POPULAR RESISTANCE COMMITTEES)**

The Popular Resistance Committees (PRC) were founded late in the year 2000, in the wake of Ariel Sharon's provocative September 28 visit to the *Haram al-Sharif*, by Jamal Abu Samhadana, who was previously a member of the Palestinian secular nationalist organizations, *Fatah* and the *Tanzim*. It is named in the TKB as a religious organization, although its membership draws from both religious and secular Palestinian militant groups. The group, allegedly inspired by Lebanese *Hizb'allah*, typically operates from the Gaza Strip, launching rockets into Israeli territory. The Salah al-Din Battalions (a.k.a., Salah al-Din Brigades) are the PRC's nominal armed branch, though there is no real structural separation between the two groups and the TKB characterizes the entire organization as not having "any focus beyond armed terrorism."<sup>336</sup>

The PRC/Salah al-Din Battalions' first recorded act of violence occurred on November 13, 2000, a month-and-a-half after Ariel Sharon entered the *Haram al-Sharif*. Gunmen belonging to the group fired on a bus and an automobile on a road north of the West Bank settlement of Ofra, killing three Israelis and wounding eight others.<sup>337</sup> This

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<sup>335</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, "Incident Profile: Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) and al-Quds Brigades Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Nov. 4, 2002, Israel)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=13196>; Internet; accessed 4 March 2006.

<sup>336</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, "Group Profile: Salah al-Din Battalions," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=3678>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006; *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, "Group Profile: Popular Resistance Committees," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Group.jsp?groupID=4211>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

<sup>337</sup> *MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base*, "Incident Profile: Salah al-Din Battalions Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Nov. 13, 2000, West Bank/Gaza)," [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=15903>; Internet; accessed 3 March 2006.

was the only operation attributed to the organizations until 2004, when they perpetrated five violent incidents. Like the PIJ, 2005 was also the PRC/Salah al-Din Battalions busiest year; they instigated 22 acts of violence against Israel that year. The groups have likewise not adhered to the *hudna*, with both the PRC (on December 28, 2005)<sup>338</sup> and the Salah al-Din Battalions (February 8, 2006)<sup>339</sup> being responsible for rocket attacks on Israeli territory.

#### **E. CONCLUSION**

Palestinian Islamic extremist organizations such as *Hamas*, the PIJ and the PRC have, in addition to perpetrating hundreds of violent operations against Israel and its citizens since September 1993, managed to win the support of substantial elements of the Palestinian demographic, as evidenced by the political success of *Hamas* in the recent parliamentary elections. These groups by their vehement, uncompromising opposition to the state of Israel and refusal to negotiate with it are acting out the fundamental principles of the religious doctrines laid out for them in the *Qur'an* and given voice by their Islamic extremist leaders. As yet another year of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict slowly grinds by, the principal Palestinian Islamic extremist group, *Hamas*, continues in spite of its political ascendancy to retain its religiously-motivated hostility toward Israel and its intractable unwillingness to participate in the peace process. What is of equal concern is that *Hamas'* sibling extremist groups, the PIJ and the PRC, have not only refused on principle to allow for the possibility of peace with Israel, but have also declined to join the Palestinian political process. Both organizations likewise have continued to carry out violent operations against Israel, abjuring the *hudna* joined by *Hamas* in advance of the elections. Collectively, these organizations represent the alter ego of the religious Zionist extremists on the Israeli side, rejecting on their own religious grounds repeated calls for an end to militant activities and any hope for a peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

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<sup>338</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Profile: Popular Resistance Committees and al-Fatah Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Dec. 28, 2005, Israel),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=27034>; Internet; accessed 7 March 2006.

<sup>339</sup> MIPT Terrorism Knowledge Base, “Incident Profile: Salah al-Din Battalions Attacked Private Citizens & Property Target (Feb. 8, 2006, Israel),” [database on-line]; available from <http://www.tkb.org/Incident.jsp?incID=27837>; Internet; accessed 7 March 2006.

## VI. CONCLUSION

As has been shown, the scriptures of Judaism and Islam provide ample, and *opposing*, cause for extremists of both faiths to take an implacable stand against any notion of an equitable peace between Israel and the Palestinians. The Jewish scriptures teach religious Zionists that they are God's chosen people, and that as a result there are certain indisputable realities regarding their position before the Almighty as well as on earth. The first of these is that they must redeem all of the land of Israel as promised to Abraham (from the Nile to the Euphrates). Second, they have an obligation, not fulfilled in almost 2,000 years, to worship God according to His ordinances in a Temple—which they believe must be on its former site in Jerusalem, where the Muslims' *Haram al-Sharif* currently stands. Finally, the messiah is coming with a millennial kingdom in tow, a fact which lays the onus on Jews to act decisively to bring the redemption of the land and the Temple about. Running through all of this is the thought that the Arabs themselves do not really matter—in the larger scheme, they are just another adversary trying to stand between the Jewish people and their divinely-appointed destiny.

Specific, influential Jewish rabbis have not only subscribed to these doctrines, but have given them new life, reinterpreting and teaching them to consecutive generations of religious Zionists. These rabbis, men like the Rabbis Kook, Meir Kahane and his son, Binyamin, though they are all now deceased, have laid the framework beneath a bedrock of religious Zionist organizations which are active to the present establishing, expanding and defending, even against the Israeli government, their settlements on land that Israeli moderates are trying to give the Palestinians in exchange for peace. Certain extremist elements among their followers have perpetrated violence against Palestinians and Jews alike with the expressed purpose of disrupting, halting or reversing negotiations to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

In the Islamic corner, one can observe a damning case constructed against Jews in the *Qur'an*. The scriptural characterization of Jews as an apostate people that abandoned, changed, or ignored the dictates of Allah at their own whim, rejected his Prophet (Muhammad), and thus are hell-bound, has potential to persuade even a moderate Muslim

to be skeptical toward Jews. Added to the mixture, however, is the scriptural warning that Jews also seek to pry Muslims away from the true faith and the real world exclamation point of Israeli encirclement of the *Haram al-Sharif*. These doctrines might not be so ominous if they were left in the pages of history. However, a succession of religious extremist leaders—including the likes of al-Banna, Qutb and Yassin—has arisen over the last several decades to issue an Islamic call to the *Umma*, one to which many Palestinian Muslims have responded, to rise up against the Israeli affront to the expressed will and word of Allah. These founding leaders of the Palestinian Islamic extremist organizations (and their predecessor groups such as the MB) have breathed life into the scriptural texts. They have applied the ancient criticisms of scripture to the modern day Jews and to the state of Israel, teaching their followers that Israel is a blight on the house of Islam that must be destroyed. Israel should be replaced, they have said, with a Palestinian Islamic state. The greatest danger has been that they have spawned groups of Palestinian Islamic extremists that are sold out to these very scripturally based causes.

Why does all of this matter? In spite of the fact that religious extremists may not represent the mainstream within the Jewish and Islamic faiths, they nonetheless have unintentionally conspired to create an atmosphere of violent intolerance for inter-faith and inter-community peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The real “so what?” lies in the fact that these Jewish and Islamic extremists have not sat back to allow a political process to work. They have been very active—more so even since the first attempted Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement in 1993—doing the exact things at all the right points in time, whether it be building settlements or murdering innocent civilians, that have stymied peace efforts. The stakes for these religious extremists are eternal, and thus their time horizons extend to infinity—far beyond the furthest limit of any democratically elected Israeli, Palestinian or Western regime, and thus further into the future than the continuity of political good-will can ever hope to reach.

Israeli and Palestinian moderates, as well as the United States and its allies in the international community therefore find themselves in a very difficult situation facing the religious extremisms in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It is one of the few situations of its kind in the world, if not the only one, where the canonical scriptures of two competing

faiths enjoin their members to stop at nothing in their fight over the same piece of real estate. It is a condition of enmity that dates back to the inceptions of Judaism and of Islam. Unless those parties favoring peace can learn to re-write scripture and force believers to accept the change, or can find a way to get inside people's minds and change not just what they believe about God, but also their entire framework of thought and action based upon that belief, then prospects are not good for achieving Israelis and Palestinians living side-by-side in "peace and security" as expressed in our National Security Strategy (NSS).<sup>340</sup>

The issue of religious extremism both in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and in general poses challenges to American policymakers and analysts, which have traditionally had difficulty contending with the issue. These individuals have displayed a propensity to address the matter of religion from a uniquely American perspective, utilizing a sort of "mirror-imaging." As Abram Shulsky and Gary Schmitt put it,

Americans are more open to a belief in the basic similarity of people throughout the world, perhaps because of America's experience in successfully absorbing and assimilating immigrants from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Thus...[they] risk being more likely...to understand and predict the actions of others on the basis of what they would do under similar circumstances.<sup>341</sup>

This analytical tendency on the part of policymakers in a religiously pluralistic, multi-ethnic society will fall short of the mark if applied to understanding and attempting to solve a conflict perpetuated, at least in part, by religious dogmatists with nothing to lose in *this* world and everything to gain in the *next*. Looking to the symptomatic political, social, economic or military issues alone to understand and craft policies toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict leaves a gaping hole in the prescription, one filled by the elephant in the room: religious extremism.

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<sup>340</sup> President, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2002), 9.

<sup>341</sup> Abram N. Shulsky and Gary J. Schmitt, *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., rev. (Dulles, VA: Brassey's, Inc., 2002), 73.

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